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CHIEFS OF PARTIES,

PAST AND PRESENT,

WITH ORIGINAL ANECDOTES.

BY

DANIEL OWEN MADDYN, ESQ.

OF THE INNER TEMPLE.

AUTHOR OF "THE AGE OF PITT AND FOX," &c. &c.

"Desire of power, on earth a vicious weed,
Yet sprung from high is of celestial seed ;
In God 'tis glory ; and when men aspire
'Tis but a spark too much of heavenly fire."

DRYDEN.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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CHIEFS OF PARTIES.



CHAPTER I.

PEEL, OR THE GREAT AMBIGUITY.

THE second portion of Sir Robert Peel's history comprises the period between his fall from office in 1830, and his advent to power in 1841. It was, in many respects, the happiest portion of his political life, and one in which he appeared to great advantage. Bred up in an exploded system of politics (of which he approved to the last), Peel had to apply his exercised energies to new considerations, and he showed considerable resources and great self-reliance. On the subject of the Reform Bill, his opinions could not be said to have been original. He did not believe that the Grey Cabinet would

ever have ventured so far in the direction of revolution. He had no counter-measure of his own, and it was a great error in the Conservative strategy of the time, that there was not even the draft of a counter-measure of Reform, until the agitated period in the middle of the session of 1832. When the Movement party in a country like England undertakes a progressive movement, it is always well for Conservative rulers to have another policy in reserve, besides one of dogged opposition to change. But Sir R. Peel was then unused to the responsibility of constitutional opposition (in which he was afterwards so famous), and he allowed the initiative to be taken by the Whigs.

The leadership of the Commons had been given to Lord Althorpe, and that appointment misled Peel in his subsequent course. There had one time been a chance that Lord Brougham would have been the leader of the House of Commons. In that case, Sir R. Peel would have girded himself for the worst; but he evidently thought that Lord Brougham had been gained over to some moderate measure, and Sir R. Peel had no apprehension of the leadership of Lord Althorpe, who was no debater. He underrated the prowess of his adversaries, and their great resources. His

own special talents lay in official administration, and in commercial subjects; for it is clear that great moral subjects, in which the passions are roused, were not those suited to his mind. He did not appreciate that deep-lying enthusiasm, which is part of the English moral character, which smoulders for years together, and then blazes forth with fiery force. Rarely did statesman make a greater blunder than Sir R. Peel, in tamely waiting the shock of Reform in 1831.

“Reform” was an old subject in the country; and for that reason Sir R. Peel seemed to think that there would be no innovation in its treatment. It did not occur to him that some of the greatest Parliamentary names had been on the Reform side, until the French Revolution interrupted the course of events, and caused alarmist passions to take possession of the English public mind. The two Pitts were in favour of Reform; and the second of them, by abolishing the Irish Parliament, and incorporating its existence with that of the English Legislature, had shown how little he regarded mere prescription. By the Relief Act of 1829, also, Sir Robert Peel had, on a great scale, altered the Irish franchises, and he had introduced Roman Catholic members to the English House of

Commons, while he disfranchised the forty shilling freeholders. Was it not strange that so clever a man should have been so blind as to meet the Reformers with such a disdainful front as he exhibited towards them in the early part of the year 1831, after he himself had largely broken in upon Parliamentary prescription?

For many years it was the custom to look upon Sir Robert Peel as a sort of professional statesman, whose chief aim was to possess the honour of being the adopted spokesman of the Tory "gentlemen of England." It was not supposed that he was great enough to be fired with the desire of becoming a ruling spirit, and his conduct at the Reform crisis was certainly unlike that of a great statesman. He had no ideas in the crisis—no plan for the future—no counter schemes to offer to the country. Nothing, truly, could have been more barren in invention than the course pursued by Sir R. Peel in 1831-2. Other statesmen had at various periods propounded various plans of Reform. Lord Clarendon, the Tory historian, in alluding to Cromwell's mode of dealing with the Legislature, declared that the notion of amending the constitution of Parliament was worthy of happier times. Sir Robert Peel stood much upon prescription,

and talked all the common-places which had been used on the subject for forty years. He spoke upon the subject with sense, knowledge, and plausibility, but without profound insight, masterly views, or ennobling conceptions. Not one soul-stirring speech came from his lips during those discussions, and he took no vigorous measure of political strategy, which might have partially dammed up the rolling tide of furious innovation. The bold counsels of Conservatism at that memorable crisis were maintained by the Duke of Wellington, the late Duke of Buckingham, Lord Lyndhurst, and Mr. Croker. In eloquence, Mr. Croker confessedly surpassed Sir R. Peel in the Reform debates. Closely grappling with his numerous adversaries, Mr. Wilson Croker denounced the Bill as a gigantic party job, and dissected its provisions with the practised acuteness of a trained critic. The parliamentary success of Mr. Croker at that time actually mortified Sir R. Peel; and none can deny that, in debating power upon that occasion, Mr. Croker carried the palm of superior eloquence from his Conservative competitors in the House of Commons. Monsieur Guizot scarcely does justice to Mr. Croker in characterising him merely as "a man of vigorous, clear, precise, and practical mind, and of persevering and pas-

sionate will," Mr. Croker showed other qualities, but I pass on.

Amongst the most remarkable incidents of the Reform bill era, was the refusal of Sir R. Peel to join with other Conservative leaders, and attempt to form a Ministry in the summer of 1832, with an avowed Reform policy. The excuse that he gave was, because such a course would have been inconsistent in one who had always opposed Reform. There was want of candour in such an excuse. Why did he not offer a similiar plea in 1829, when he conceded a measure to which he had always been opposed? His conduct in both cases could not have been right. If the dread of inconsistency was the reason why he refused to take Reform responsibilities on him in 1832, how could his unparalleled tergiversation in 1829 be defended? The conduct of this extraordinary personage in 1825, 1829, 1832, and 1846, showed that his character fluctuated to and fro, and that on great public occasions, when pressure would be heavily applied, no one could tell whether Peel would be firm? Such men ought never to receive the first places in historical memory, and in national applause. It is right that the chief honours should be assigned to stalwart natures, who preserve their manhood unshaken by passing

circumstances. Constancy is a noble quality. It is one of the brightest moral attributes that human nature can show. It is the safeguard of many of the domestic virtues ; and the most gifted man, or the most graceful woman, can never secure our admiration for an hour, when we find them to be wavering, changeful, and uncertain. We excuse the weakness of the sex ; but in a man, and especially in one whose mission is to rule others, we hope for the steadiness which is first to rule himself. He is to master circumstances, and not to be their servitor. Even in the "mute creation," a strong hold upon human affection is possessed by the dog, whose bravery is enhanced by his strong fidelity to his friends. Constancy and courage mean the same thing to the soldier ; we hope for it in the lover and the friend ; and as citizens we demand it imperatively from him to whom we entrust our fair fame before the world, and whom we elevate as a leader into the highest political station. And in constancy Sir Robert Peel was lamentably deficient. The wavering which marked every step in his career, is most singular to contemplate.

After the Reform Bill passed, Sir Robert Peel, considered as a private individual, appeared certainly to a great advantage in the House of Com-

mons. The First Reformed Parliament, with its crowd of empty and excited provincial politicians, gave Sir Robert Peel the exact sort of assembly in which he could shine pre-eminently, with many of the first, and with all the secondary accomplishments that mark a great British senator. His readiness and skill in debate, his complete knowledge of public business, his close mastery of the currency question, and his high merits as an artful and most persuasive speaker, were favourably contrasted with the lumbering manner of Lord Althorpe, and the declamatory vehemence of the Radicals. I always admired the varied senatorian abilities shown by Sir Robert Peel from 1833 to 1841. It was the period of his life in which, according to my judgment, he appeared most creditably; and I shall endeavour to record the impression left upon me by his conduct at that time. In doing so, I shall give proofs to show how much I am entirely opposed to the rancorous criticism which would studiously disparage the great public abilities of Sir Robert Peel.

The movement party in 1833-4 was inadequately represented in Parliament; for the Irish associations and Roman Catholic convictions of Mr. O'Connell rendered him quite unsuited (besides other circumstances) for popular leadership

in England. The great Liberal Party could then not have been better led than by Mr. Stanley ; and it might have been preserved from the decrepitude of subsequent years, if to his commanding powers and masterly talent for debate, the leadership in the House of Commons had been assigned. His eloquent and singularly ready replies to the great Irish tribune would then have been armed with double effect ; and, in that position, he might have been enabled to save the Whig party from the ruinous alliance at Lichfield House, with a body of representatives with whom they would have been sorry to associate familiarly, though the English aristocracy is never squeamish about its political associates, as the history of faction from the time of Wilkes downwards amply demonstrates. Lord Althorpe was ineffective as a leader of the Reformed Parliament, and the amazed looks of all the new members, when they saw their leader stammering and faltering at the red box, told the tale of his utter oratorical incapacity.

The position occupied by Sir Robert Peel in the first Reformed Parliament was remarkable, and deserves special notice. The bravest heart of all his associates, that of Lord Lyndhurst, had begun to despair of the constitution. Others, also,

of the old Tory connection croaked raven notes on the fall of the mixed government of England. "The boroughs were gone. The Church was paralyzed for ever, and the aristocracy entirely crushed." Such was their gloomy note, uttered with lugubrious monotony. But Peel, perfectly master of himself and his passions, applied himself with practical sagacity to the study of the new state of things; and, like a great state architect, he calculated the materials at his disposal, while he drew out his large design of a party erected upon the broad and massive foundations of English society. Nothing better indicated the force and breadth of his practical intellect than the fact, that in his designs of a Conservative Party he was not narrowed to merely parliamentary views, but grasped in his mental vision the ample circle of the public at large. He had the odds against him. His reputation was associated with resistance to the Liberalism which was the fashion; his name had long been the target of patrician and plebeian envy. The Duke of Wellington did not see the way before him, and the desponding tone of his allies was enough to damp the ardour of the most creative genius. Sir R. Peel sat in 1833 in the House of Commons with only about a hundred and thirty members behind him, and his arms

were apparently tied for political action. But as he proudly said, eighteen years afterwards, "I never despaired;" and he lived to justify his views, and to die with popular regret.

As he looked around the benches, where, in former years, he had so many skilful and intrepid coadjutors, he might well have desponded. Some of the most promising of his associates in the Liverpool Cabinet were opposed to him, or gone to the Upper House. Lord Palmerston, Lord Ripon, and Mr. Charles Grant were Whigs. Mr. J. W. Ward (Lord Dudley) was no more. Mr. Croker had given up the game, and intrenched himself in the pages of the *Quarterly Review*. Sir Robert Inglis was a political archæologist, not a practical statesman; his mind was with the age of Queen Anne; he was *only* a century behind the time—amiable and accomplished—the Sir Charles Grandison of bigots—a great ornament to any cause, but without the perception of political actuality. Not until the next year was Mr. Gladstone, an orator and a genius, returned to Parliament; and in 1833 there was only one member by the side of Sir Robert Peel in Opposition with eminent parliamentary talents. That was Mr. Shaw—Recorder of Dublin—ready and intrepid in debate, with the good taste of English,

and the fire of Irish eloquence; but the provinciality of his topics detracted from his utility, and his constant encounters with the demagogues of his country had given him an Orange aspect, not natural to him.

What, then, had Peel to rely upon? He had—*himself*. He had his unbroken constitution, his official experience of twenty years, his hoarded knowledge—the fame of one pitted against Canning, Plunket, and Brougham in debate—his strong English sense, practical though not splendid eloquence, and unrivalled capacity for the business of the Commons. Armed with these powers—strong in his own greatness—he stood up, with assured ease and complacency, to address, for the first time, the Reformed House of Commons. There was the greatest anxiety to hear him. The new members—the mercantile representatives of the large towns—wished to listen to the debater whose solid capacity and deep knowledge they had often admired in the reports; and his old Whig adversaries in the Treasury Benches were equally anxious to see what tone he would take, and how he would suit himself to the new position. He commenced with an air of extreme modesty, and a well-acted humility. He stated, with much touching grace, that he was well aware of the

great difference between his present and his former position before the House of Commons ; in other days he had been head of a majority, or of a large and powerful minority. The times now were altered. He was reduced to the station of a private Member of Parliament ; but still he was sure that, even in that position, the House would give him that fair play which it never refused to any of its members. His tone of graceful humility was artfully assumed. It was a masterpiece of political histrionics, and was in itself a specimen of high oratorical art. His quiet manner, his air of modesty, his dulcet voice, his easy winding into the subject, and the style of candour with which he announced his intention of supporting the Government where he could conscientiously, produced a most favourable impression on his audience. Most of the new members were deeply interested in commercial prosperity, and his sensible remarks on financial matters, which came out from the speaker with the ease of perfect knowledge, rivetted their ears.

Before three weeks had elapsed, it was impressed upon all the new members of the Reformed Parliament that Sir R. Peel was the first and most competent man of affairs in the House. His common sense and attainments told upon them all

with great effect ; and his candour disarmed them of many prejudices against him. As he was beginning to rise in general estimation, so the Ministry were beginning to sink in popularity. Two measures which were carried, both absolutely necessary and required by public duty, exposed them to the *ad captandum* charges of being as absolutist, harsh, and anti-popular, as any Tories that ever had concocted the Six Acts. The two measures were the New Poor Law, and the Irish Coercion Bill.

In the course followed by Sir R. Peel at that time, EVENTS—the political deities which he worshipped—were highly favourable to him. England had become alarmed, and wealthy “Reformers” were getting panic-stricken. Many were disgusted with the Radicals who followed Mr. Hume, and more disliked the dictatorial tones of Mr. O’Connell. The conduct of the Irish Roman Catholic body, and the use made of their newly-acquired power, alarmed others. Convulsions appeared probable. The state of the Continent was perilous, and capital trembled in the hands of its holders. “The English people,” said Sir R. Peel in one of his semi-convivial revelations at Tamworth, “are a people difficult to understand. But there is one thing plain amongst them. They

love money, and the making of money, and it is of no use for such a people to possess money, if they have not the power of comfortably enjoying it. And, therefore, such a people will never be addicted in the long run to revolutionary measures." This view seems plausible at first, but it is essentially shallow. Violent measures and revolutionary proceedings ruled the English public for many years, and intimidated the heart of the statesman who once spoke the foregoing words, whose substance at least is faithfully reported.

A view of Sir R. Peel at this time, 1835-40, might make him look larger than he really was. His knowledge and talent for debate were universally admitted, but his will was deficient. He never could have overthrown the Liberals if their chiefs had not differed amongst themselves. The Duke of Richmond had originally been disgusted with the extraordinary mode in which the Catholic claims had been conceded, and his Grace had consented, with other distinguished public characters, to join Earl Grey's cabinet in 1831 ; but, in 1834, when the Protestant Church was menaced by some of the Whigs, and by all of the Radicals, the Duke of Richmond, Mr. Stanley (Lord Derby), Earl of Ripon, Sir James Graham, and Lord George Bentinck (who was then a silent, but by no

means inattentive politician), took up a decided stand, and said to the Movement party :—" Thus far shalt thou come, but no farther. Here shall your crested breakers be stayed." They consented that the Church of Ireland, or, in more correct words—" The Church of Great Britain and Ireland," should be reformed, but not that it should be destroyed. The revenues of certain bishoprics were re-distributed in order to give more parochial efficiency to the clergy, but the funds were preserved from spoliation.

It was at this point of time that the basis for the Conservative party was really laid. " And even," said Mr. Stanley (Lord Derby), in his speech on the Approbation Clause in 1834—" even if I saw a House of Commons about to pass such a measure, and if the Protestant parliament of a Protestant people were ready to endorse such a measure, I do not think that I am living in times when a Protestant Sovereign, on a Protestant Throne, will consent to such a bill." The Whigs, who desired that the movement should be stopped, seceded from the Grey Liberals. Earl Grey himself vacillated and retired before the difficulties of the time ; Lord Brougham quarrelled with his colleagues and with himself ; an O'Connellphobia seized on a large portion of the English

Whig gentry ; Brookes's club split in two sections, and the Liberal party appeared to be rent in twain.

The word "Conservative" is of older date than the Reform-Bill struggles. "The principle of the Whig party is amelioration," wrote Mr. Hallam ; "of the Tory party, conservation." The consolidation of the party took place on the return of Sir Robert Peel from Rome in December 1834. His friends always considered the circumstances under which he was sent for as being amongst the proudest of his recollections. It sounded well that the King of England should send a special express for Sir Robert Peel to Italy. It sounded better that, at such a crisis, the people of England waited for three weeks before they knew whether Sir Robert Peel would accept office or not. There was an air of something grand in the Empire of England thus pausing upon the resolves of the member for Tamworth. Sir Robert Peel's political figure seemed larger than before under such circumstances.

But let us not now be deceived by the illusions of the time. In estimating the historical size of Sir Robert Peel, as contrasted with Walpole (with whom it is believed that he desired to be compared), or with the younger Pitt (to whom he bore not

the least resemblance), we must not forget that *Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, was always at the side of Sir Robert Peel*. The Court, in 1834, had virtually cast itself upon the Duke of Wellington for aid, and the Duke "stood by his sovereign," and requested the help of Sir Robert Peel. Of that crisis, and of the greater part of the responsibility, the burthen rested upon the Duke of Wellington. Neither Walpole, nor the younger Pitt, had ever a Wellington at their right hands.

To some extent, the influence of the name and moral spell of Wellington diminish the greatness of Sir Robert Peel. But we do not forget how eagerly the overwhelming portion of the solid wealth of the city of London espoused the claims of Sir Robert Peel at his return from Rome. The famous "Bankers' address" was presented to him, signed by a great number of the first banking firms in London, in their own names, and by a multitude of wealthy merchants and influential citizens. All the names appeared in one huge advertisement published in the *Times*, to the exclusion of all other announcements, and for which the sum of £240 was paid. It was, beyond question, the greatest advertisement that ever appeared in that famous Journal, and the race

of Peel may proudly preserve it amongst their heir-looms.

The celebrated address to the Electors of Tamworth was one of the best documents ever put forward by Sir Robert Peel. Its tone was measured and yet masterly; its language bold and business-like. It produced great effect, and it was conceived in a statesman-like spirit. Its literary composition is the closest that ever came from the pen of Sir Robert Peel. He struck some chords which vibrated powerfully. Nothing could be better than his frank profession of the full acceptance of "the spirit of the Reform Bill," with the distinct understanding that such a phrase meant "a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical, undertaken in a friendly temper," but studiously disclaiming it, "if, by the spirit of the Reform Bill, it be meant that we are to live in a perpetual vortex of agitation; that public men can only support themselves in public estimation by adopting every popular impression of the day—by promising the instant redress of any thing which any body may call an abuse—by abandoning altogether that great aid of government, more powerful than either law or reason—the respect for ancient rights and the difference to prescriptive authority"—all these passages we

repeat are most skilfully touched, and most judiciously worded. For England, in the winter of 1834, dreading further innovation, wearied of the vanity and vacillation of the Reform chiefs, disgusted with the truculence and browbeating tyranny of Mr. O'Connell and his Parliamentary followers, such an address was admirably calculated to produce an effect. I have seen some literary disparagement of this address; but one of its greatest merits was its practical character, so suited to a commercial people. It was plain, plausible, strong, and not at all prolix. It began with a good key-note for catching the ears of the monarchical people of England:—"On the 26th of November last, being then at Rome, I received from his Majesty a summons, wholly unforeseen and unexpected by me, to return to England without delay, for the purpose of assisting his Majesty in the formation of a new Government. I instantly obeyed the command," &c. &c.

Taken as a whole, this manifesto was eminently skilful, and it furnished a sort of political creed to his party for many years. I do not know where to look for a more dexterous document coming from a Premier's pen. It pleased the middle classes well, and had even some charms for many amongst his professional adversaries.

It was a statement well suited to popular circulation. It wants the polish, and the barbed incisive sentences which would be found in an epistle of a similar kind on such an occasion from the pen of Lord John Russell, but it is more safe than the political addresses of the noble Member for the City. The "Letter to the Electors of Stroud" (1839), by the last-named statesman is a choice piece of composition, but its refined touches would not be appreciated by the crowd; its conclusion, "I will not lift the anchors of the monarchy while the signs of a storm are black in the horizon," is one of those soaring thoughts, coloured with fancy, and instinct with strong emotion, that were always wanting in the artificial eloquence of Sir Robert Peel.

Excellent as was the tone of this Tamworth address, we shall subsequently see, in 1839, how our Parliamentary Waverer again vacillated when pressure was upon him. He took office in 1834, with the Court and the Duke of Wellington to his back. He advised a dissolution, and the Whig aristocracy shook hands with Mr. O'Connell and the Priests, and established telegraphic communication between Woburn Abbey and the Vatican. Sir Robert Peel, in defending himself afterwards from the charge of presumption for having taken

office declared, that "he never anticipated, after what had passed, that the Member for Dublin (Mr. O'Connell) and the Whig party could have coalesced." Neither could others have done so. It may be admitted that, as far as Lord John Russell and a few others were concerned, honourable feelings influenced the "Litchfield House Compact;" but looked at without passion, and after the event, it was a flagrant scandal on the great Liberal party of England. Lord John Russell aspired to carry out the wishes of the illustrious Grattan in Ireland; but, in order to do so, the Irish popular party should have been guided by minds nurtured in the manners of the school to which Charlemont and Mr. Grattan and Mr. Daly, and I willingly add, Mr. Flood and Mr. Curran, belonged.

Sir R. Peel was beaten by the "Litchfield House Compact." He fought his parliamentary battle with singular ability, and greatly increased his reputation as a debater—cool, artful, and never wanting in knowledge, ever master of himself, and often of his audience. Lord Stanley and Sir James Graham aided him on the flank, but it cannot be denied that he struggled gallantly in the van. Those who know his powers were not surprised at the resources which he displayed; but the public out of doors had much to learn of the

range of his abilities, and in politics as in other callings,

“*Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.*”

His adroitness was a good substitute for real eloquence; his command of Parliamentary knowledge, his familiarity with commerce, his sympathy with “the City,” and his air of business, all told well for him, and his adversaries universally admitted his great powers. Grave people compared him rashly with Pitt: but they forgot that young William Pitt, in the long session of 1784, facing Fox, Burke, Lord North, and an adverse majority, was in the twenty-fifth year of his age, while Peel in 1835 was forty-seven years old. The talents displayed by both at these two periods was admirable, but very different in kind. Pitt’s power was precocious yet natural, and much of Peel’s ability was the result of training and hoarded experience, and it is only to the former case of a young man struggling with a host—that the term “wonderful” is applicable. But in justice it must be recollected that Pitt in 1784 had the public out of doors with him, and that the uncrowned noun of multitude, “the people,” was against Peel in 1835.

After some time spent in diplomatic preliminaries, an effective union between the Duke of Wellington, Lord Lyndhurst, and Sir Robert Peel on the one side, and the Duke of Richmond, Lord Stanley (Earl of Derby), and Sir James Graham on the other, was carried into operation, and the Great Conservative Opposition, one of the most splendid confederacies that ever swayed the British Legislature, was consolidated. It was supported by an overwhelming majority of the aristocracy and gentry of the Empire ; the Church was in its favour, and so were a vast number of the leading persons in the learned professions ; the West End of London and the World of Fashion actively aided it, and "the City" though more divided) gave its confidence to the Conservative Chiefs. The tongue of Lord Brougham and the pen of Sydney Smith (by an odd coincidence) were simultaneously employed in deriding the pretensions of Lord Melbourne and his colleagues. Down to the death of King William, "the Court" was decidedly with the Opposition, and there never was so great an array of political strength in Opposition seen as in the Conservative party of that time. The Duke of Wellington, hale and vigorous, was recovering his popularity ;

his virtues and his mighty name were again revered, and the people feared him not out of office. Lord Lyndhurst was then swaying the House of Peers with a personal ascendancy never won before by a law-lord. His dauntless spirit, his flaying invectives against the Liberals, his unrivalled physical presence, his debonair graces in public, and captivating qualities in private, gave him great power over the peers. Lord Stanley was then at his zenith as a debater, "the lineal representative of the Fox and Pitt school," as the late Earl Grey said; Sir James Graham, cool in his malignity, and industriously vindictive, endeavoured by his persevering bitterness, and by his general acquirements, to make up for the want of first-class talents and extemporaneous powers; Sir William Follett, then in tolerable health, spoke eloquently in the House of Commons, and the gentlemen of England may well have been proud of the distinguished Chiefs under whom they marshalled.

At the head of that proud connection, Sir Robert Peel at that time stood first in the House of Commons, and in our judgment the station which he then filled, and the character which he then possessed, in the esteem of enthusiastic supporters, and of enlightened and chivalrous

adversaries, was “something more and better”* than any position, official or personal which he afterwards attained. It was the period, also, when his eloquence was most matured, and when a loftier tone, a more genuine dignity, and greater classical polish, adorned his speeches. I do not think that entire justice was ever done to his powers in debate. To do so properly would demand a long essay ; but I can only briefly describe his rare faculties for influencing by speech an assembly of English gentlemen.

Sir Robert Peel was the most practically persuasive speaker I ever heard. Though not an orator of the highest class, his talents in addressing a public assembly were extraordinary. His voice was like a lute, pleasing, resonant, and not too loud ; his words came clearly from his lips, without

* What Goldsmith rightly calls “the excellent epitaph” on Bolingbroke, runs thus :—

Here lies
Henry St. John,
In the reign of Queen Anne
Secretary at War, Secretary of State, and Viscount
Bolingbroke.
In the days of King George I.
and King George II.
Something more and better, &c.

any pedantic formalism ; his fluency was unbroken, and he had high histrionic powers of delivery. This able man, who in private life was often so awkward, and almost rude, assumed an air of graceful amenity and of bland insinuation, when addressing the House of Commons ; and it was difficult to listen to his melodious tones, and dexterous play of parliamentary logic, without being gradually biassed. He excelled in clearness of statement, and his Currency speech of 1819 is a first-class model of that particular kind of oration. No man could approach an audience with more art ; no one could better choose the tone right for employing, and he was seldom thrown off his guard.

In choice of matter, also, this excellent debater was a great proficient. He selected the exact kind of facts likely to produce effect, and no one ever surpassed him in the art of dropping facts in the right place. It was the fashion for a long time to disparage the oratorical powers of Sir Robert Peel ; and it is true that he had not the graces of Canning, nor the fiery powers of Plunket and Brougham. He had no imagination and he had no wit, though he had some humour. He was no artist in invective, and his tongue never poured forth the burning words of genius ; but, on the

other hand, he was a consummate master of the plausible ; he had great powers of producing practical effect, and he was not to be equalled in oratorical judgment. He could engage and sustain the attention of a large number of men ; and, if he could not crush an eloquent adversary, he could seriously damage him, for he never lost sight of any chance given by the rashness of a foe. He was extremely successful in so presenting a view of a subject, as to make the more candid of his opponents doubt the justice of their cause. He sapped one side and strengthened the other, after a manner peculiarly his own.

It was the opinion of Mr. Charles Butler (an excellent judge) that the ablest speech ever delivered against the Roman Catholics was the argument of Sir Robert Peel in 1817. Grattan also said of that speech—that “it was replete with talent and effect. *Whatever could be said on that side, he has said it.*” It was afterwards replied to in 1821 by Plunket, in the Irish orator’s greatest and most elaborate effort. Another speech of vast ability was Sir R. Peel’s address on the same subject in 1828, and in a few months afterwards on the other side of the question. Sir Robert Peel, in 1829, made what I consider his greatest rhetorical effort. Let any one who doubts

the oratorical skill of Sir Robert Peel peruse his speech in 1829, made on the recantation of his views, and say how it would be possible to have made a better speech in the unparalleled situation of the speaker. It was a master-piece of art; and, though little time was given for the preparation, it was highly wrought, and is a most finished specimen of English senatorian eloquence. It produced great effect in the delivery, for it was spoken with high elocutionary powers; it enchains the attention in the closet. In the whole of that session, also, Sir R. Peel spoke with uncommon force and self-command, defending himself from his assailants in a style that none but a most masterly speaker could exhibit. He rarely appeared to more advantage as a speaker than in some of his short replies in that year, when his tone was more impassioned, and his bearing seemed frank and free from subterfuge.

That he wanted nature is true; and that he had no poetry of soul cannot be denied. But English speakers are compelled to address the judgment and common-sense of their audiences, and the English mind is averse from brilliant declamation. As a mere master of language, Sir R. Peel has often been excelled. As a master of Parliamentary argument he has not been equalled

in our time. Criticising him by the compass of his powers, there was at times an excess of verbiage, and a recurrence to plausible artifices, which almost justified the appellation of *Joseph Surface*, fastened on him for years by the brilliant editor of the *Examiner*; but something of mannerism must be allowed to every speaker who has often to address the same audience. On the whole, it would be difficult to name any one great speaker who combined together so much of the tone and temper of an administrative statesman, with the oratorical resources necessary for swaying a Senate; and, though Sir Robert Peel could not soar to the highest flights of an orator, it is difficult to say when, since Fox and Pitt, he was surpassed as a debater. Both in and out of Parliament, his skilful arrangement of the argument, his profusion of illustrative matter, his artful catering to national prejudices, his specious glosses, his rapid attacks on unguarded adversaries, produced much effect for many years; and such results, let critics wrangle about words as they please, could not have been achieved without oratorical powers of an extraordinary kind. On a subject where I entertained strong convictions, Sir Robert Peel could not have shaken my views; but in the general range of questions which make up the great busi-

ness of Parliament, Sir R. Peel, I repeat, was the most persuasive speaker I ever heard.

It was not surprising with all these powers, and with a great political interest behind him, that he occupied a splendid position in 1838-41, in the eyes both of the Aristocracy and Democracy of England. Yet even then there was a fatal flaw in that proud connection, and that flaw was to be found in the fluctuating mind and impressible nature of Sir Robert Peel. Let the following facts be observed :—The Whigs were mismanaging the finances of the country, and were deranging the money market; they were attempting little, and performing less in Law Reform (which had been shelved by Lord Cottenham); they were hesitating how to deal with the Corn Laws, and they confessedly did not understand the subject; they were keeping the whole Liberal party in a vague state, and they knew not where to steer. Their Irish allies were helping to sink them in English estimation. Lord John Russell gallantly struggled in the House of Commons, and showed unquailing spirit and untiring talents in debate, “a host in himself,” as the Duke of Wellington called him to Mr. Rogers; but the Whigs were powerless, and could have been routed if a man with the nerve of Lord Lyndhurst had been then at the

head of "the gentlemen of England" in the House of Commons. But, after the death of King William, the Court was in favour of the Whigs, and Sir Robert Peel dreaded "the Court," supported with the popularity of a Sovereign of the gentle sex, at the most interesting period of life. In 1839 this eminent man faltered again; and with "Ireland is my difficulty" on his lips, and with the "Bed-Chamber Question" as a pretext, he hesitated to take office! A financier would then have saved the Whigs from ruin at that time, but the Whigs never had a financier since Walpole.

Holding a chair between his hands, and with one knee resting on it, as if to assume a careless ease, Sir Robert Peel used to lecture his friends and collective supporters assembled in his back drawing-room at Whitehall. "No," he used to say (in 1839-40), "I certainly will not take office while these people are getting the country into financial trouble. You see how there must be a deficit. They depend on 'popularity,' and they dread the ten-pounders. They will not propose more taxes, for that would upset them. Well, why should I go in to do their work? If we, the Conservatives, had power to-morrow, the first thing we should do is to put the finances into better order. If taxation were necessary for that

purpose, the new Liberal Opposition would raise a cry amongst the constituencies;" and much more to the same effect he used to add. This conduct seemed like a policy in 1841, when his party came into power with ninety majority. But Sir Robert Peel, as a few months showed, had no fixed general principles, no positive ideas, or fundamental views. Ireland he had called his "difficulty," and he had no policy with regard to it, and so also on Protection. Facile and impressible, he was ready to be moulded as circumstances would command. Burke said that true statesmanship presupposes "presiding principles and prolific energy," and that description is suitable not only to natures of the highest ruling powers, like Cæsar, Cromwell, or Napoleon. It characterises men like Walpole, Chatham, or Chatham's son. But the career of such a man as we have been contemplating was never governed by fixed principles. He was in state politics little more than a great official index to the last state of the poll, real or reported.

If, at that time, any one had predicted that the chief of the proud Conservative connection would, in six years, utterly destroy it—that he would truckle to the dictation of a democratic league, and recant his views about protection to corn—that he would do so suddenly, and without giving any

notice to his supporters—that, after boasting with arrogance in 1839 of his being at the head of “the gentlemen of England,” he would jeer and flout at them in 1846 as “monopolists”—that he would panegyrize Mr. Cobden—that he would conduct matters in such a manner as to make Parliament subordinate for the time to popular lecturers and an organised platform—that, at the last moment, this Conservative Chief would scout all considerations of party honour, and contemptuously disregard the prescriptive ordinances of English Parliamentary life—that he would carry out in office the policy which belonged to Opposition, and do so with cool and dogged indifference to reproaches cast upon him by the overwhelming majority of his followers—I say, if all this had been predicted, people would have laughed at the prophet as one fit for Bedlam. Yet this Conservative Chief—this leader of “the gentlemen of England,” did all these things; and he did them with a peculiar grossness of manner to the party that trusted him, and with a selfishness of purpose which cannot but leave a deep and heavy stain on the public reputation of a statesman, whose good and bad qualities were so singularly blended. Let people conclude as they please about the effects of Free Trade, the way in which Sir Robert Peel

carried it can never be approved, unless Englishmen—Liberals and Tories—give up all their ideas about the obligations of political honour.

Now, although there was no one who could have predicted in 1840 or 1841, that Sir Robert Peel would shatter the Conservative party in '46, and for many years blast its prospects, it is curious that, in 1844, Lord Melbourne, with great penetration, pierced through his designs. Lord Melbourne was no free trader in corn; "foregad, my Lords," he said on one occasion, "the man who would think of abolishing the Corn Laws must be mad;" and, not long before his fall from power, his Lordship archly said—"Whoever touches the Corn Laws, my Lords, must go." In 1844, at an evening assembly, Lord Melbourne chanced to find himself close by one of the most respected and influential of the literary supporters of the Whig connection, long and confidentially known to Lord Melbourne. "You will see that Peel," said Lord Melbourne, "will now turn about and squeeze the Manchester party. He has got every drop that he can out of the landed party; he will now use up the commercial interest, and get all he can out of that, too." And, after some remarks Lord Melbourne continued, "Ah! you will see that what I now say will come to pass. At all

events, Peel will try it." His Lordship was speculating only as to Peel's intention ; as to what would be the final event of the struggle, he was not then discussing.

In two years afterwards, Lord Melbourne sought and obtained a special audience from the Highest Personage. Royalty had continued to look with a favouring regard on one of the most faithful servants whom Queen Victoria had ever employed. The interview was appointed at Windsor Castle ; its object, that of uttering a respectful protest against the total repeal of the corn-laws, and of demurring to the peculiar mode of operation followed by Sir R. Peel, was known to the Sovereign. It is not now, nor was it then, any secret, that the Court *had been always* in favour of cheap corn. Lord Melbourne was received graciously, with the courtesy ever extended to him. After a time, the old statesman and ex-minister began upon the political subject of the day. He gave his opinion, and it was listened to with a gracious intimation that the Highest Personage in the realm was of an entirely opposite way of thinking. Lord Melbourne, in a grave mood (and recent illness had then much shaken his health), proceeded respectfully to argue his views ; but, though the personal interview was not cut short, a playful but peremp-

tory veto (which Lord Melbourne well understood) was placed on further remonstrances. "You have not seen my new improvements, my Lord"—was the gracefully pleasant mode in which Majesty relieved itself from the old courtier's warning voice, and the Queen herself led the way to show Lord Melbourne the new alterations at the Castle. Full of his subject—conscious that he could not expect many such opportunities—profoundly loyal to his Sovereign—Lord Melbourne again essayed an attempt to win the ear of his Royal Mistress, but again came the veto—"Oh! but I forgot; you have not seen the other changes which I have made here. There is much more that your Lordship has to see"—and the old statesman had to give up the hope of further argument on the great question of the time. It was a strange thing that, after having in 1844 predicted the career of Sir R. Peel, Lord Melbourne should have been found in 1846, endeavouring to interpose his advice against the policy advocated by Sir R. Peel, so accurately foretold.

But it is still stranger that so many observers have failed to mark the excessive influence always possessed by "the Court" over the mind of Sir R. Peel.

The fact is, that there is an overwhelming case

to shew that "the Court" always had a daunting influence over Sir R. Peel, to an extent the reverse of praiseworthy in a British statesman. "I have served four Sovereigns," was his own rather servile boast, and he might truly have added—"I have always endeavoured to accommodate myself to the Court." Down to 1826, "the Court" was decidedly Anti-Catholic, and no one was more zealously Protestant than Sir R. Peel in the days when the Duke of York (the next heir to the Throne) made his "So help me God" declaration. The Duke of York died, and so did Lord Liverpool, and George the Fourth was ill. The Duke of Wellington became Premier, and the Duke of Clarence was likely before long to become King. Changes of a momentous character, unknown to the public, were taking place at Court and in the cabinet.

But what were the ideas in the Duke of Wellington's mind? It was then privately known by the Duke of Wellington that George the Fourth was far more seriously ill of disease of the heart than was believed by the King himself, or by some of his medical attendants.* "His Majesty can live at the furthest only for two years," was the

* His danger was concealed from the King himself.

confidential and secret opinion given by a special medical authority on heart-disease (still alive), who had examined the King, and who positively pronounced that the valves of the heart were mortally affected, and that he had cataract of the eyes. George the Fourth being certain to die soon, and the Duke of Clarence (an emancipator) being his successor, "the Court" would then be at the other side of the question, and Sir R. Peel would not be the man, in calculating circumstances, to overlook the results of the change of sovereigns.

King William, as it now is admitted, vacillated in 1832, and Sir R. Peel followed the example of the Court. When the King threw himself on the Duke of Wellington in 1834, Sir R. Peel got improved nerve. But when the King died, and when Queen Victoria came to the throne, Sir R. Peel felt timid about "the Court." At last, when the Whigs had exhausted at once the favour of "the Court" and the patience of the country, Sir R. Peel went into power.

Is there in parliamentary memory another instance of a Minister, who, with so large a majority in both Houses—with such influential classes at his back—with a baffled Opposition before him, and a united connection behind him—is there, I

ask, another case of a Minister with such large support, who exhibited himself in so tremulous an attitude, and who spread doubts so far and near by the spectacle of his obvious vacillations? He has acknowledged in his posthumous papers, that his opinions on the Corn Laws were taken up "*without much serious reflection!*"* But he adhered to them down to 1845, and surely he had abundance of time for consideration. It is plain, also, though he has been silent on this point in his posthumous papers, that "the Court" exercised an influence over him in 1846, greater than he would have acknowledged to his supporters.

On the general character of such a statesman, so slow in seeing great political truths, Count Cavour has spoken the following words in the Sardinian Senate, which almost assume the tone of philosophical history—

It is my opinion that Sir R. Peel would have left a *much more illustrious name behind him*, if, instead of having been compelled by circumstances to introduce reforms, *he himself had originated them*. I think that Sir Robert Peel would have left behind him a fame unequalled in history if, instead of proposing *the emancipation of the Catholics in 1829*, *he had proposed it in 1825*; I think

* "Adopted, I fear, without much serious reflection," (Peel Papers, vol. ii. p. 98.)

that his name would have eclipsed all those of ancient and *modern statesmen* if the reform of the corn laws *had been initiated in 1840*—a good harvest year—instead of being passed in consequence of the famine which desolated Ireland, and *instead of being in some measure a consequence of the potato disease*. In fact, if Sir Robert Peel had been *the originator of reforms*, he would at his death have left to his friends a political inheritance far different from that which he bequeathed to them.

And on the peculiar mode in which Sir R. Peel circumvented his followers, Monsieur Guizot, a partial critic, admits :—

In great conjunctures, this conflict of subtle and always rather obscure manœuvres, under an outward shew of perfect sincerity, is one of the weak points in representative government ; and men of lofty character can alone surmount its embarrassments by simple, prompt, and bold recantation and words. I do not find that in these negotiations at this period, Sir Robert Peel or the Whigs displayed this greatness of soul. The Whigs aimed at too much security, and Sir Robert at too much liberty. When men talk of saving a nation, they must be ready to accept some doubtful chances, and to make heavier sacrifices.

But, in justice to the Whigs, it must be recollected that Lord John Russell and his friends had committed themselves frankly, by having taken the initiative in advancing towards Free Trade. Lord John Russell had no opinions to recant ; he de-

ceived no followers ; he betrayed no confidence ; he sacrificed no connection for the sake of his own aggrandizement, or for the investiture of his name with a clamorous popularity, unbounded and undiscerning in its nature, but unscrupulously obtained, and therefore most unlikely to last before a calm posterity.

I could cite passages from numbers of independent organs of opinion, showing that in the most opposite directions a decided reaction has set in against the reputation of Sir Robert Peel. I content myself with reprinting the final verdict of the "Times." Upwards of three months after the publication of his "Papers," the "Times" (14th and 16th April, 1857) discussed his conduct at great length with great critical and literary talent : and after recording its opinion, that "Sir Robert Peel's conduct is not bettered by the publication of these Memoirs," it proceeds :—

It is simply a very sorry spectacle to find the most eminent passages of a life made up of long and tedious recantation. It is a spectacle damaging to public morality, and from the effects of which we have not yet recovered, and it must necessarily cloud the fame of its author, when history comes to regard him, unbiassed by the predilections of his friends and contemporaries.

I have watched with care the tone of various

observers on both portions of "The Peel Papers." I have heard them discussed in private and political circles, and I have read what has been printed on them in various organs. The effect has been what I always anticipated. A reaction has decidedly begun to take place against the extravagant estimate placed on the public career of the conceding Conservative, who never successfully led a party but to its ruin—who never joined a cause but when it was popular and prosperous—and who never consistently adhered to its fortunes when the hour of trial was approaching. Unless the character of the English people were to experience a revolution for the worse, it was absolutely impossible that a career of such self-convicted error, and such systematic conversion in presence of external force, could possibly have been left at the artificial height which the accident of a painful death had left it in 1850. If Lord John Russell, in 1832 had been drowned out of a Thames wherry at Richmond, or if Lord Palmerston, in a month after the taking of Sebastopol, had been driven over in Piccadilly, and died, after lingering in a week's torture, one can easily imagine how much the public sympathy would have been attracted towards him, and what a softened tone would have been assumed by adversaries lately in hostile collision.

The pathos of an agonizing death-bed did much at the time to conciliate to Sir Robert Peel an immense amount of sympathy. People remembered the career of the great Parliamentary celebrity, whose name had been so long familiarised to the public mind. His great and acknowledged abilities, his unsurpassed political attainments, his popular origin, his early academical and parliamentary distinction, his exemplary private life, his pecuniary munificence, his patronage of the arts, his long friendship with Wellington, his favour at Court, and the respect entertained for him abroad—all these considerations were powerfully reinforced in their influence over society, by the horribly dramatic *finale* of a public death.

Something of a similar kind had been witnessed in the summer of 1839, when it was proclaimed that Henry Lord Brougham had been dashed out of his carriage in Westmoreland. Lord Brougham was then extremely unpopular amongst the Whigs and Liberals, whose chiefs he was satirising and even vilifying. But the memories of other days came over his bitterest foes, who, for a few brief hours, in presence of a supposed death, were completely softened. The voice of cavilling was hushed, and criticism suspended its deliberate opinions on the man. So it was with Sir Robert

Peel. The sneers of his opponents were silenced ; the sobs of his friends, and the sighs of his admirers, were alone allowed to reach the public ear. Self-interest induced not a few to concoct a systematic canonization of his memory. Politicians, without any hold on the affections of either party, vowed fidelity to each other over his grave.

Add to these considerations that the Whig party, holding office at the time of Sir R. Peel's death, was weak, powerless, and unpopular—that Lord Palmerston was dreaded by many sections as a fire-brand in European affairs—that the Protectionists were associated with a lost cause—that other public characters, like Mr. Cobden or Mr. Bright, were either distrusted or disliked—and we can easily conceive how the relative superiority of Sir R. Peel to several of his contemporaries was mistaken by the public mind, for the positive predominance of a great and original nature, of the stamp of Walpole or Chatham, or the younger Pitt or Edmund Burke. He was looked at through favouring prejudices. From an able man he was exaggerated into being a mighty one ; from an excellent debater he was suddenly promoted to the dignity of a consummate orator ; from an accomplished political chief he was lifted into the pedestal of a national dictator ; in a word, this artful and vigilant

waiter on events, this flexible being, was extolled as an original nature, boldly novel in its ideas, grandly comprehensive in its range of thought, and exalted with the loftiest philanthropy.

But the time has come when these extravagant exaggerations must be largely abated, and when a juster estimate must be formed of the distinguished person whom I have called "The Great Ambiguity of his Age." The prevalent reaction against the extravagant over-estimate of Sir R. Peel's services is wholesome in its nature, and will be most beneficial in its consequences. The serious errors which he committed in his most equivocal reticence on questions where he should have spoken with more real, and less of assumed, candour, should be held up as a warning to the rising statesmen of the age. The young politicians of the coming time should learn to see how Sir R. Peel gave humiliating exemplifications of the truth of the maxim—that timely changes are concessions to a friend, but late ones are surrenders to a foe, and the Parliamentary tone should be raised beyond that standard of public morals which yields to violence, what it refuses to argument.

Let ample honour be paid to the great talents and the great public services of Sir Robert Peel; but, in justice to all the patriots passed away, and

in fairness to the growing manhood of the land, let not the unsatisfactory and ambiguous career of a Parliamentary Waverer be honoured by the applause given to the memory of the master-spirits who have ruled England since the Reformation, and whose bold deeds and lofty characters rebuke the idle panegyrists, who, misled by excited feelings, have made as absurd mistakes about Sir Robert Peel, as a historian would if he assigned to Cranmer the historical importance of a Luther.

CHAPTER II.

ANECDOTES OF SIR ROBERT PEEL.

It has been justly remarked by Mr. Disraeli in his gracefully penned sketch of Sir Robert Peel that he had a bad manner, of which he was sensible; he was by nature very shy, but forced early in life into eminent positions, he had formed an artificial manner, haughtily stiff, or exuberantly bland, of which generally speaking, he could not divest himself.* The phrase "exuberantly bland" describes with great felicity the overacted familiarity of Sir Robert Peel, when he wished to be particularly condescending. Sometimes, also, his deportment could only be called

* "Lord George Bentinck's Life," (p 224)—Routledge's edition—and in the same work it was previously remarked—"This remarkable man who in private life was constrained and often awkward, who could never address a public meeting, or make an after dinner speech without being ill at ease &c. &c. (p. 48).

“mannerless.” It was only in the House of Commons that he was ready, easy, and happily adroit. In nothing, certainly, was Sir Robert Peel more deficient than in manners, especially when in intercourse with strangers. At times, his want of high-bred courtesy was downright rude, though not intentionally so; his lack of graciousness and his deficiency in amenity told heavily against him, when Lord George Bentinck and Mr. Disraeli commenced their attacks on him.

“When I first went into Parliament,” said to myself, one of Peel’s most successful and eloquent political followers, “I was not personally acquainted with Sir Robert Peel. I greatly admired his talents, and I approved of his principles, and many of his connexion were anxious to see me in the House. I publicly avowed myself at the hustings as one of his supporters, and I sacrificed money, time, and trouble, to gain a seat for his cause. After being about a fortnight in the House, it was proposed to me by —— that I should be personally introduced to Sir Robert, and it was arranged to wait for a leisure moment to do so. It was while we were sitting in the temporary edifice, just before going into Sir Charles Barry’s new House. We were both in

the lobby, and Sir Robert walked slowly across, and went into the long passage that used to lead into the House of Lords. Nobody was with him. 'Now is the time,' said Lord ——, and he ran after Sir Robert Peel, calling him by name. I followed at a short distance, and heard my name mentioned. I advanced to meet him, and raised my hat. A freezing bow was all that I received—not a smile, nor a single word of encouragement, not the slightest civility. I felt as if all the shower-baths in London had made an aggregate experiment on me, with a view of giving me a cold water cure for my too heated regard for Sir Robert. I could not help thinking of the Parliamentary tract 'Peel or Stanley—which shall lead us?' in which the graphic and sarcastic writer apostrophised Sir Robert Peel with the words—'You wither us by your cold looks.'"

One day Sir Robert Peel was riding, near Birmingham, in company with one of the leading professional celebrities of London, then on a visit with him at Drayton Manor. They passed a new and handsome villa, which Sir Robert Peel pointed out as belonging to one of the chief professional men in Birmingham. "He is," said Sir Robert's companion, "one of the oldest friends I have in the world, and it is nearly twenty years since

I have taken him by the hand, although I often correspond with him." "Oh!" said Sir Robert Peel, "I'll drive you up there with pleasure," and the coachman was ordered to drive to the villa. "And you must come in with me, Sir Robert?" said his companion, "my old friend will, I am sure, be proud of seeing me with the Prime Minister in his house." Sir Robert Peel consented to go in. The greeting between the two old friends was cordial and joyous. The family, also, at first felt much pleasure at receiving Sir Robert Peel. The honours of the house were performed with grace and hospitality. A choice luncheon, admirably served, was immediately set forth, and the Prime Minister sat down to the table. From the time that Sir Robert Peel entered that villa to his leaving it, he never opened his lips nor joined in the conversation. "I would not have minded it as far as I myself was concerned," said the eldest son of the gentleman who owned the villa, "but my father is one of the most respectable professional men in England, and in his way just as respectable a man as Sir Robert Peel's father, and I bitterly felt for the affront to him." Yet Sir Robert Peel meant no affront. It was simply the fault of his manners, which at times were certainly most ungracious.

About 1830, when Sir Robert Peel was leader of the House of Commons, his manners became particularly stiff and affectedly haughty. Mr. Canning was then dead, Mr. Plunket had become a Peer, the eloquence of Mr. Stanley (Lord Derby) had not been yet heard in its full vigour, and Sir Robert Peel was overtopped in debate and Parliamentary prowess only by Mr. Brougham. His father was lately dead, and he had come to the inheritance of Drayton Manor and his large fortune, and he had just completed one of his picture galleries. He was Chief of a Party, the right hand man of Wellington, and leader of the House of Commons. He became, perhaps unconsciously to himself, grandiose, pompous, and most consequential in his tone. After Brougham had been elevated to the Chancellorship, Sir Robert Peel believed that no one could meet him in debate, and as was remarked at the time—"he gave himself absurd airs," and he assumed a tone of rudeness addressing the Liberals, which he had never ventured to do when Henry Brougham was ready to spring at him.

But while leading the House under the Wellington Cabinet, Sir Robert's manners were peculiarly stilted and repellent. At that time, there was sitting in the House of Commons, a com-

mercial gentleman, who supported the government. He was a contractor and "capitalist," and was the owner of establishments, which brought him much under the public eye. He sat on the Ministerial back benches, and voted steadily as the whipper-in wished, and votes were of consequence to the Wellington Cabinet, shaken as it was by the events of 1829. One evening in 1830, this commercial M.P. was going down to the House about seven o'clock, and, crossing Palace Yard, he saw Sir Robert Peel walking by himself. The contractor stood still, and just as Sir Robert was passing, in a moment of indiscreet familiarity, the Government supporter had the audacity to say—"Is the House up, Sir Robert?" Those who were present, and who saw the expression of Sir Robert Peel's face can never forget it. He stared with as much amazement as Bumble, when Oliver Twist asked for "more." He gave the contractor an icy gaze of freezing scorn, and did not bestow upon him even a monosyllable.

When a mere boy, Peel had been taken to see Pitt at the House of Commons, and he must, doubtless, have been impressed with his imposing air, and haughty stare of austere pride. But Pitt was not only Chatham's son; he had the

blood of the Grenvilles in his veins, and his pride was natural, and not assumed. His antecedents, also, made his hauteur endurable. When Peel attempted calm grandeur of manners, he was always stilted.

What made his "haughtily stiff" manner more difficult to bear was, that sometimes in his speeches he affected to refer with great humility to his new origin. Thus in one of his anti-Reform Speeches in 1831, he said, enforcing the value of prescription, "The anomalies of antiquity are to the anomalies of yesterday what the hereditary honours of a Russell or a Howard would be, were *I* to present myself to the House of Lords with a new patent of Peerage, &c."* There was more of rhetorical artifice than of true commercial pride in such *ad captandum* references to his origin.

"I really do not think Sir Robert Peel so very stiff, and reserved, and haughty, as he is said to be. I know that *I* have found him the reverse, and he was very polite to *me*. Only last week, I received a note from him desiring me to attend him at two o'clock in the day, and you remember that in the evening he had to make his great

* Speech of the 22nd September 1831.

financial statement. Well, I waited on him, and I was shown up to his back drawing-room, and he was punctual to the minute. After operating on him, he asked me whether I had ever seen the view over the river from the back of his house, and on my saying that I had not, he took me out himself upon the balcony, and then the great man staid talking to me for nearly twenty minutes, pointing out to me all the objects on the river and its banks. He was really extremely affable; I never met a more courteous gentleman." As the speaker told his story, his hearers exchanged smiles of intelligence. The "operator" was simply a chiropodist, or corn-cutter! He was speaking to some of the most eminent of the surgical faculty while waiting about a case. "Pooh! Mr. ——," said a great surgeon, "Sir Robert Peel did the right thing. He had a great speech to make, and the matter of it was weighing on his sensitive nervous system. He knew that looking at the running river for a few minutes would help to calm his nervousness, and he continued speaking with you to disperse his ideas." The chiropodist was not much elated at this explanation of the "exuberantly bland" manner of Sir Robert Peel, who at that time had an issue in his poll in order to relieve him from the flow of blood to the head.

His knowledge of Parliamentary effect was almost an instinct, and his advice about it invaluable. On one occasion, a leading Irish official had rashly committed himself by sending a challenge to an adversary, who had assailed him with great severity of imputation. The English public clamoured that the Irish official should at once be dismissed, but Sir R. Peel stood by him generously, though some of his colleagues were for abandoning him. The Opposition attacked the Irish official with great acrimony, and he had to repair to London to defend himself. On the evening before he made his defence, Sir Robert Peel made him dine with him privately at a *tête-à-tête* dinner. "Now," said Sir Robert, advising him, "go through the whole case from first to last ; place all the facts of it fairly and consecutively before the House, which will listen with attention to your account of all your important proceedings in Ireland. Tell all that you did, and use every argument that occurs to you ; reason out and justify the conduct of yourself and colleagues. Keep the duelling matter to the very last, and having defended yourself upon every other charge, say to the House, that there is, unfortunately, one charge upon which you cannot make any defence, and that you are quite aware that in reference to it

you have no course left to you of offering any plea of justification, and that you can only throw yourself on the generous consideration of an assembly of English gentlemen." The official did exactly as Sir Robert Peel advised, he made a close, clear, and consecutive statement, and displayed high argumentative powers in vindicating his public conduct. After enchainng for several hours the attention of the House in an admirably lucid address, the speaker came to the escapade of the challenge; and the House was most curious and interested to know how he would manage that part of the case. "He will," thought members to themselves, "try and palliate it. It was done only in Ireland, where Mr. Attorney-General Fitzgibbon had fought Mr. Curran, and had even tried to shoot him; and where the Chief Secretary, Mr. Hobart (afterwards Earl of Buckinghamshire), had also fought Mr. Curran, in a country where the Chancellor of the Exchequer (Mr. Corry) had fought the Leader of the Opposition in presence of the High Sheriff of Dublin, &c." But the speaker did nothing of the sort. In a quiet way, and with a gracefully subdued but not all whining manner, he did what Sir Robert advised him. The effect was electric, the appeal to the House was answered with a burst of deafening

cheers, and after a high toned peroration the speaker sat down amidst universal applause.

Sir Robert Peel, though a great patron of the Fine Arts, and though with considerable pretensions to be a connoisseur, was by no means a fine, or even a correct judge of pictures. One of the most eminent of our now living R.A's, has assured me that he has known Sir Robert Peel to have been egregiously deceived in his purchases, even after having had previous warning, and that Sir Robert Peel had no real claims to be spoken of as "an excellent judge of pictures." But of speeches he was a far better and more competent critic. Of Lord Plunket's oratory he was an ardent, yet discriminating admirer. He stated himself, in 1844, that Mr. Plunket's speech on the Catholic Question, in 1821, was "nearly the greatest Parliamentary effort he ever heard." Not long before his death, Sir R. Peel, and the late Mr. Shiel were at a dinner party, when the conversation turned on Lord Macaulay's History of England. Some one in company expressed great praise on the historian's brilliant character of William the Third. "I know a still grander portraiture of King William than Mr. Macaulay's," said Mr. Shiel. The company looked incredulous, and Mr. Shiel then

cited Lord Plunket's description of King William in the great speech of the *Bottle Treason Case* at Dublin, in 1823. "You are quite right," said Sir R. Peel; "the picture drawn of King William by Lord Plunket is, in my judgment, still finer than Macaulay's."

A few months after Sir Robert Peel had died, I visited a most interesting provincial city, which contains social elements well meriting the most attentive consideration of a political observer. Amongst my letters of private introduction, was one to an eminent Unitarian Clergyman, who filled a considerable space for many years in the public eye, and whose powerful speeches in favour of progressive and intellectual Liberalism, were applauded in the best journals of the Whig Party. On intercourse with this gentleman, I saw abundant reasons for feeling that his reputation for mental power and vigour of intellect was amply justified. Although so formidable a leader of local Liberalism, the Unitarian Clergyman had considerable influence with some of the Tory magnates of his neighbourhood, who doubtless were happy to court one wielding such sway over the opinion of a neighbourhood, where the Tory party was compelled to appeal not only to territorial interests, but to general opinion. Over the

chimney piece of the clergyman's library was an admirable print of Sir Robert Peel; and my eye was at once caught with it. It struck me as strange, that so staunch a Liberal should give so much honour to Peel, as there was no other engraving of any kind in the apartment. "Ah!" said he, "there were few men who mourned over Sir Robert Peel more sincerely than I did. I knew him well for five and twenty years, and I had repeated intercourse with him, and am proud to have been one of his friends. It was he gave me that print himself, and you will observe that it is taken from a private plate. I differed from his politics, and was opposed to him on public grounds; but I honour the memory of the man himself, as I am convinced from close observation of him, that his conduct was regulated by the purest sentiments towards the common weal, and that all his views were those which a patriot might avow." This tribute coming from the lips of an able adversary, was further impressed on me by what occurred to me a few hours afterwards. There was in the same city an eminent ruler of orthodox Dissenters, whose religious ideas were strongly coloured by a keen aversion to Unitarianism and its supporters. He was an able controversialist, and possessed the confidence of large

bodies of the religious world, and wielded great influence over Dissenting clergymen. Having accepted an invitation from him to dine, I was carefully cautioned beforehand by a resident in the locality, not to mention in anywise the name of the Unitarian clergyman, as there was a long standing political feud between them, and the neighbourhood had occasionally been startled by their controversial duels.

After dinner, I was not a little struck by the circumstance that though the walls of the dining-room contained various scriptural engravings, there was only one portrait amongst them, and that was a likeness of Sir Robert Peel over the chimney-piece. Recollecting the antagonism between my host and the Unitarian Minister, my attention was directed to this circumstance, and I turned the conversation upon Sir Robert Peel.

“Ah!” said my host, “what a man that was! Many abused him, and poured hard words upon him, and others gave him injudicious praise; but here is the impression that he left upon me. I knew him well for thirty years. I have been used constantly to repair to London, sometimes twice a year, for the purpose of transacting official business connected with my church. I have known all the statesmen that have held the Seals of the Home

Office from the year 1820, and this I will say—that Sir Robert Peel left upon me this distinct impression: ‘Here is exactly the sort of man whom I would at once summon to my right hand if I were king of England.’ I had repeated instances of witnessing the great speed with which he despatched pressing affairs, and he worked with such great caution. His knowledge was extraordinary. I have known him, when taken suddenly without any preparation, refer with such closeness and accuracy to the details of our sectarian affairs in years gone by, and I never knew him mistaken in a fact. One would have thought that he was making the internal affairs of provincial Dissenters his special duty. I never saw any one even approach him in capacity for business. He was the proper man for a Prime Minister of England.”

These testimonies to Peel made much impression on me, from the circumstance that the two reverend gentlemen who gave them, probably agreed with each other only on the one point of extreme admiration for Sir Robert Peel.

His munificence to men of genius in difficulties and privation, has probably never received adequate honour. The way in which he responded to the last request from Haydon, the painter, is

affectingly recorded in the last pages of the artist's diary. He did many acts of good that never will be known. One of the ablest and most effective of his literary adversaries communicated to me the following striking instance of Sir R. Peel's princely liberality. In a remote district of the kingdom, there dwelt a literary man living in a very humble way; he was oppressed with pecuniary difficulties, his health was broken, and he had a wife and several children. His intellectual faculty was admirable of its kind, but it was not of that nature which could be lucrative, on account of its narrow speciality, but Peel greatly admired and appreciated it. When the news of Peel's death was suddenly communicated to the retired writer, he was observed to be greatly agitated, and after a few moments, he said with emotion :

“ Well, Sir Robert Peel was the kindest friend I ever had. I never had it in my power to serve him. My praise or dispraise was not of the least consequence to him, and when my case was privately brought before him, he sent me from himself two hundred pounds. But that was not all. On two other occasions, he went out of his way, amidst all his occupations, to inquire particularly about me, and unasked, either by me or by any one else, but aware of my painful

position, he *twice* sent me fifty pounds from himself."

Such acts of noble generosity speak to the heart with more powerful effect than the most elaborate panegyric. And of Sir Robert Peel it could be truly said, that he was not only generous but just, and that he always acted with the strictest equity towards those who had any personal claims upon himself.

CHAPTER III.

HOLLAND HOUSE.

HOLLAND HOUSE literature, with its attractive title and insipid contents, is like the juice of the familiar gooseberry circled with the label that belongs to Epernay. We expect to be exhilarated, but a short trial nauseates and repels. Its bitterness is without brilliancy; muddy and acidulous, even its tartness is soporific. The best works of "Holland House" were vicarious in their merits; its dinners were excellent, its memorials are wretched. Confounding slanders with scandals, taking rumours for facts, Lord Holland is scarcely worth roasting before a slow fire of criticism; but an examination of the vaunted "Holland House" is not without use.

The first point for illustration is the method by which "Holland House" gathered its literary

frequenters. In the last century, literary men stood in a peculiar relation to the wealthy and influential families that sway the Legislature. In much that related to every-day life it was an age of the coffee-house and the wine-tavern. Society was more open than it is now to agreeable adventurers, with lively manners, good address, and quiet assurance. Persons of the best condition ate their steaks and drank their claret in the numerous coffee-houses that abounded near Covent Garden and the Temple. Men about town who could either write or talk well had more chances in their favour than at present. There was more intimacy between the haughty peer and his political clients, than there is now between the chiefs of party and their various literary subordinates. Now literature aspires to the conventional regularity of a profession ; in those times it was a lottery with a few grand prizes and a wheel full of blanks.

Smollett has left us in his novels a lively picture of the nature of a great man's antechamber in those days. A crowd of adventurers, more picturesque than polite, awaited the rising of the grandee. The French Revolution came, and a gradual social change occurred. There was a reaction against adventurers : brilliant scamps living on

their wits, whose lives were sometimes more gay than their comedies, or not unfrequently sadder than their rejected tragedies, became unpopular. "Respectability now became the cry, and "a wholesome prejudice" set in against poets scrambling up Parnassus with bailiffs at their heels, and political oracles against whom their tailors cried "anathema." In truth, as the traditions of our predecessors inform us, the coffee-houses then (1789-1815) became noisy, disputatious, and painfully polemical. Ministers were scolded at one table, and Opposition extolled at another ; the guests poured out invectives more fiery than their wine. The old, genial humour of the pleasant-lounging coffee-house companions was at end. Debating societies, regular or irregular, were the order of the time, and Boniface gave himself the airs of "Mr. Speaker."

In such times (*circa* 1815) "Holland House," and for about ten years subsequently, enjoyed its palmiest time. It had no competitors to rival its hospitality, and there were peculiar circumstances which gave an exaggerated importance to its réunions. As yet the club system had not been established, and the great mansions of that day were less brilliant than at previous or subsequent periods. The royal palace was shrouded in dark-

ness and sorrow ; the Prince of Wales had grown old, wore wigs, and preferred Lord Eldon and port to Sheridan and brandy. The glories of Devonshire House had been dimmed. Its fascinating mistress was mouldering in the grave ; her not less beautiful sister had also vanished from the scene. Lady Melbourne, too, was grown old, and on the horizon of fashion no brilliant orbs appeared in place of those lost lights of the gay world. Hertford House was neither popular nor brilliant ; the wife of Lord Castlereagh, leader of the Commons, was beautiful in person, and interesting in manners, but too delicate in health for the labours of hospitality. The Chancellor's house of that day was very different in its attractions from that brilliant mansion near Hanover Square where, in saloons thronged with fashion, the gorgeous beauty of Sarah Lady Lyndhurst shone as resplendently as the talents of her famous husband in the Senate.

The Whigs in those days had not the social resources of other times. Lord Grey was cold, and not covetous of personal popularity. The Duke of Richmond and the Duke of Portland voted with Ministers, and, as Devonshire House had ceased to be political, "Holland House" in such times became more important. It was more

social, less reserved, certainly more amusing, than patrician mansions of the period. It opened with facility to the amusing crowd of male notabilities who underwent a season of lionising in its menagerie. The tavern life of the previous century was to some extent brilliantly revived. Everybody was at home, and every one had some special interest in the place. To some it was a chapel of ease to Bellamy's kitchen, and though its beefsteaks might have been less juicy, its jokes were as savoury as any echoed in the corridors of St. Stephen's. There the hungry sages of the north devoured and drank and quoted each other, and praised themselves, and smiled at her ladyship's wit, and shut their ears and opened their mouths when "his lordship" commenced to Boswellise over the bottle. The host was king of his company. Stammering and ineffective in the House of Peers, he enjoyed the attention paid to him by bibulous philosophers who came from the Scotch side of the border, and from parliamentary politicians who had a historical regard for anything human baptised as "Fox." Did the conversation flag, "as my uncle once said" operated like magic on the listeners, and Edinburgh Reviewers gaped with reverent awe and paused on their busy forks. Or perchance it might be, "when my grandfather was

dining with the King"—or a fling at the character of Pitt, or a calumny upon Marie Antoinette—or an un-English burst of enthusiasm about Napoleon—or some personality about the reckless habits of the dying Sheridan—or some paltry sneers at the Duke of Wellington—or a disparagement of the glorious Nelson—or a hateful backbiting of the accomplished Windham; it was small talk spiced with sarcastic inuendoes and peppered with scandalous stories. But then we are told that we ought to have admired the exhibition; the bitter things were said with so much suavity; there was such benevolence on the countenance while the tongue was stabbing the characters of the absent or the dead. It was detraction trying to delight; it was backbiting with bonhommie. Its admirers only lament, when such table talk is printed, that the reader cannot have the advantage of the joyous chuckle with which Marie Antoinette was traduced, or the pleasant face with which Windham was maligned. We are assured that though "Holland House" memoirs are nothing but dull detraction, the conversation there was excellent, and abounded in brilliancy. But your popular patriots from the other side of the border found everything delightful when they found themselves in company with real live English lords, with a plenteous table,

sparkling wines, and the outward show of good society. Frothy platitudes escaped censure while champagne foamed; and mediocrity was approved along with the madeira. Invitations were given liberally and accepted thankfully, and "Holland House" for a time had a most exaggerated fame.

But all this was doomed to have an end, and long before the host and hostess had resigned their hospitable toils. Two great blows were given to its convivial celebrity, and they came from opposite quarters. Mr. Croker's best and most creditable work, the formation of the *Athenæum Club*, was completely successful; and the social distinctiveness of meeting the notabilities of professional life in familiar intercourse with the magnates of society was once and for ever taken away from "Holland House." The extension of the club system completed the effect, and an ordinary house dinner at the "Garrick," fifteen years ago, with the Duke of Beaufort, and Lord Saye and Sele, and Theodore Hook, and James Smith, and "Ingoldsby," and many other celebrities in the circles of fashion and wit, often excelled in convivial pleasure the réunions at "Holland House." It was discovered that, after all, "Holland House" depended chiefly on extrinsic

distinctions which new phases of society had rendered common. But the second blow was more special and particular, and, oddly enough, it came from a countrywoman of Mr. Croker.

Margaret Countess of Blessington was a woman of rare gifts, and still rarer personal attractions. Of her character and her career, and the strange story associated with her name, we need not speak. With singular fascination of address, setting off the lustre of a beauty that was at once voluptuous and refined, her figure was imposing, without losing its feminine grace, and her address frank and insinuating, while the humour of her country flowed on her pleasant vivacious tongue, and the fire of its Celtic passion lighted up her luxuriant dark eyes. A sojourner for years in southern climes, her nature had gradually acquired the artistic spirit and genial enthusiasm so common amongst Italian and Provençal women. She was certainly one of the most attractive persons that ever figured in those circles where social pleasures are pursued as great ends of existence.

Such was the woman gifted with beauty and genial humour, who converted "Gore House" into a formidable rival of the over-praised "Holland House," with its pretensions to a monopoly of intellectual society. The gay, fresh-ringing conver-

sation at Gore House was far beyond that mixture of parliamentary small talk and *Literary Club* opinionativeness which the frequenters of Holland House pretended to regard as the quintessence of social brilliancy. The society at "Gore House" had also other inexpressible merits over the meetings at its Kensington competitor. Pleasant it was, and most brilliant, to see some choice specimens of the sex mingling with warriors of world-wide renown, with orators, also, who

"Bound the bar and senate in their spells,"

and with numbers of accomplished persons noted in literature and art. Who on a summer evening would leave the sight of that then charming garden at Kensington Gore, with the perfumed air echoing the wit a brace of gallant ex-Chancellors; that enlivening scene, where, amidst flowering shrubberies, and amidst a group of happy listeners, the conqueror of Waterloo was playing *carte* and *tierce* with some nimble-witted assailant whose ladylike logic, with its strong reserve of cheery, heart-inspiring laughter, carried the victory from the otherwise invincible Wellesley—who would change a scene like that for "Holland House," with its nasty stories and its bitter inuendoes, and its popularity-hunting patronage of authors and artists?

Between these two "houses" an amusing parallel might be written, indicating the points of contrast and similarity between them, both associated with "scandal" and with pleasurable reunions. We need not pursue it; but we may say that, whatever the faults of the Gore House circles, it did not assail and traduce the living and the dead, like its less amiable though more "historical" rival.

But where are the illusions of Holland House now? Gone—utterly gone beyond redemption by all the powers of rhetoric. They are gone with the miserable revelations of its utter mediocrity in the "Memoirs of the Whigs" and offensive "Anecdotes of Foreign Courts," published by Lord Holland. Where is the wit, or the genius, or the style, or the scholarship (of which we were so often told), or the philosophy, in any of their pages? Lord Holland had full leisure; he had ample opportunities for observation; and, after the most laborious efforts, he could leave behind him nothing but twaddling anecdotes, told in slipshod language. Writing of a national hero like Lord Nelson, he says, "His greatness was a strong instance of the superiority of the heart over the head, and a strong proof that a warm imagination is a more necessary ingredient in the com-

“position of a hero than a sound understanding.” Lord Nelson had an intellect which would have raised him to the first rank in any profession. He was completely master of every branch of naval science, and the annals of war do not record a more remarkable case of prescient sagacity than Nelson’s divination of the escape of the French fleet to the West Indies in 1805, and again discovering that they had returned. Not satisfied with impeaching his intellect, Lord Holland devotes half of the space allotted to Nelson to the consideration of Lady Hamilton’s “scandal.” He does more justice to Mr. Pitt: if he tried to diminish the greatness of Mr. Pitt’s genius, Lord Holland felt that he would have been injuring the fame of “my uncle, Mr. Fox.” But mark how he denies any merit to the pecuniary disinterestedness of Pitt:—

I have not spoken of his disinterestedness about money! It was, however, acknowledged by his enemies, and would in a man of inferior capacity have deserved to be recorded as a virtue. But it is a negative virtue at best; and in a statesman of great ability who is contending for “crown and kingdoms,” and has neither children nor family to provide for, it seems of no difficult attainment. He must be a fool indeed who would barter the mighty space of such large honours for so much trash as may be grasped at.

I feel no pleasure in calling attention to the fact of a public subscription having been made for Mr. Fox, to the amount of thirty-six thousand pounds, when he had squandered the enormous sums of money given to him by his father, to whose fortune the maxim of "ill got, ill gone," is painfully applicable. The fact of the subscriptions having been levied from Whig pockets for the sustenance of Mr. Fox has been the precedent for the tributes given to Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Cobden. The largesse given to Charles Fox ought to have been recollected when Lord Holland vilified the acts of Sheridan. Even so truly eminent a member of the Whig party as the late Earl Grey does not escape from his aspersion. He commemorates the altercations between Lord Grey and his brother-in-law, Mr. Whitbread. He even insinuates that the conduct of Lord Grey had the effect of shortening his relative's life ! Here are Lord Holland's words :—

Mr. Whitbread was always surrounded by flatterers ; some, from mere servility of disposition and submissive admiration of all he said or did ; others, with baser designs of interest or revenge, instilled suspicions and inflamed his animosity against his brother-in-law. Lord Grey, on the other hand, frank, artless, and impetuous, and conscious of the sincerity as well as purity of his affections,

never measured his words nor restrained his warmth in his intercourse with a man with whom he had been so long and so intimately connected. The uneasy footing on which they lived was a source of vexation to both. Perhaps it was ultimately fatal, to the peace, the fortune, and even the life of Mr. Whitbread.

Who but Lord Holland would have insinuated that quarrels with Lord Grey had shortened the days of Whitbread? I have always thought that Whitbread, like Lord Castlereagh, lost his reason from having been vastly overworked. The management of his extensive brewery in Chiswell Street and of his large landed property, along with his incessant exertions as an active member of Parliament, were enough to overtask any man; and, in addition to these toils, he tried to arrange the chaotic concerns of Drury Lane Theatre. The charge against Lord Grey of "not measuring his words" comes with singular grace from the pen of a nobleman whose posthumous memoirs incriminate friends and foes. Mr. Whitbread was rather intractable in his party, and Lord Byron happily called him "the Demosthenes of bad taste;" and Lord Grey would not allow himself to be browbeat by any man. But when the eminent name of Grey standing so high for personal honour and consistency is thus assailed by the

censorious pen of Lord Holland, we need not expect that any reputation can escape from the safe malignity of his acrimonious style. Lord Holland delights in accusing his contemporaries of being surrounded by "flatterers"—a charge which might have been retaliated on the dinner-giving peer. Lord Macaulay has drawn the character of Windham—"the finest gentleman of the age ; his form "developed by every manly exercise ; his face "beaming with intelligence and spirit ; the ingenious, the chivalrous, the high-souled Windham." Of this brilliant man we are told by Lord Holland, "He loved flattery, and his palate loved it in a "gross form, and served up in the *meanest plat-* " *ter.*" The insinuation is most unjust. Sooner than truckle to some of the public journals, Windham endured being unreported in the debates, and he tauntingly called the press "that fourth estate." We lose all patience when we are told "that the most fulsome adulation from an "inferior blinded his discernment" (p. 206) ; "his vanity stifled all affection and deadened all "feelings for others in him" (p. 209) ; "that he "was more capable of hatred than love in private" (p. 210)—charges that we have no hesitation in pronouncing to be calumnies upon the memory of a right noble Englishman. In the same way Mr.

Grattan is sneered at for "singular manners;" and it is falsely said that "he was *exclusively* interested in Irish affairs" (p. 237). So deeply interested was Henry Grattan in *imperial* affairs that in 1808 he called upon the English Parliament to put down "the *French* party in Ireland," and cast away his *Irish* popularity by doing so; and again, in 1815, he zealously supported Government in calling for war against France. Lord Holland, as "a *French* Whig," ought to have recollected such facts. In a similar way the personal honour of Mr. Curran (pp. 167-8) is aspersed; and so with Sheridan, and almost every other public character submitted to his censure.

The conclusion which can be inferred from Holland House literature is, that the anomalous thing called "political popularity" produces vast illusions amongst the ignorant spectators. It makes pigmies look like men, and gives to men of moderate stature the appearance of giants. To talk loudly about great things is ignorantly confounded with the capacity for performing them; mediocrities are invested with the contemporaneous celebrity due only to mighty natures; and persons of showy pretensions are counted on as substantial public benefactors. Like damned poets, the

“popular” and unpractical politician appeals to posterity ; and, when his name is exhumed by history, his pretensions either vanish, or faintly dwindle down into dwarfish shadows.

CHAPTER IV.

MR. WILSON CROKER.

ABOUT the period when the disastrous rebellion of 1798 was distracting Ireland, there might have been noticed two students in Trinity College, Dublin, who in subsequent times became literary celebrities. The elder of the two, was a short, thickset, coarse-looking, chubby-faced lad, shabbily dressed, and without any outward or visible sign of the fire of genius or the light of poetical inspiration. He could sing a good song, however, and compose playful verses with much taste and feeling. Amongst his occasional companions was a sharp-visaged stripling, evidently on excellent terms with himself, and with the peculiarly saucy air of self-confidence common to top boys in the sixth form, and to promising young men at universities. His appearance, though slightly bilious

even in those youthful days, before passion had scarred his face with the furrows of brooding thoughts, was far more intellectual and more gentlemanly than that of the vulgar youth first mentioned. Both were literary amateurs, and "general readers" rather than hard-working students; each had obtained academical honours, though not of a very conspicuous kind. Many of their companions and associates might have been chosen as likely to go further and higher on the steep and thorny path towards the height of fame. Both, however, were joyous, and reckless of the cares of life. One of them associated with "United Irishmen," though his fancy was most conversant with amatory poetry for, when Wolfe Tone plotted and young Emmett raved, he translated Anacreon while talking boyish treason, and chanted "Songs from the Greek" in praise of wine, while he made his libations to Bacchus, from a more potent and less classical beverage. The other frequented tea-tables, and affected dandyism. He was more regular in his visits to the theatre than to the college chapel, and criticised everybody and everything with an assumed omniscience that distanced all imitation. He was a walking cyclopædia of Dublin gossip; he wrote epigrams in albums, and elaborated

lampoons; and he was, in short, so very clever in his way that he did not well know whether he should honour the Church, the Senate, or the Bar, with his prospects of celebrity. For that he would make a noise in the world, and teach people to understand that, after all, nobody could ever be right except himself, and that possibly without his permission Europe never could be managed at all—upon these points this aspiring young collegian had made up his mind!

Such were the lads who in after years wielded, on opposite sides, two of the most active pens ever employed in party politics. Such, in their teens, were the Moore and Croker of our own times! Little did either of them foresee the sort of life to which they were destined, and that the talents of both would be put into requisition by the chiefs of English “party.” In literary genius, of course, the palm must be assigned to the author of the exquisite “Irish Melodies;” for the powers of his companion’s plastic intellect were too often wasted on ephemeral polemics. But the latter was superior in force of resolution, in logical combativeness, in a singular versatility of intellect—manifested by him as a brilliant debater, a hard-working official, an ingenious essay-writer, an incessant pamphleteer, a formidable reviewer, a

lacerating lampooner, and, last, not least, an insatiable anecdotist of all contemporary characters !

Mr. Croker has often been hardly judged and bitterly criticised. In his long account of his “quarrels *with* authors” I rather think that, upon the whole, he is the loser, and that he has often been made to suffer more punishment than he ever inflicted. He committed one of the most grievous faults in any author—he wrote too much. In his self-assumed office of censor of the politics of England and her empire he appeared too often in his invidious capacity : the recurrence of his reviews was not only too frequent, but his special performances were too diffuse. Readers were tired with the iteration of his acrimony, and the mechanical structure of his style became at last monotonous. He established a rope’s-end school of criticism, and was not satisfied without his showing us the ropewalk in which his scourges were woven. He so often flourished his lash, that at last people began to look on him as compelled, like a bed-ridden fox-hunter, to be obliged to crack his whip for the sake of old habits. Chastising and criticising seemed to him synonymous. He appeared to keep a file of damaging paragraphs ; he was the historian of indiscreet expressions ; and he carefully illustrated

obscure particulars of mean scandals. He wrote about Empire, the Constitution, and the Church in a style that made us think at every page of "Martinus Scriblerus" and, "P. P. Clerk of the Parish." Mighty questions were treated in a small way; the cant of the hour was oftener echoed than principles were expounded. "Dame Partington, excellent at a slop or a puddle, but unable to keep out the Atlantic," was a stroke evidently aimed by Sydney Smith at the periodical scolding which, with Roman capitals and sentences in italics, used to make its appearance, always punctual to the day, but in its matter almost as grotesquely anachronous as Guy Fawkes in the month of June. Much of his literary character might be traced to his own idiosyncrasy, affected by the prolonged practice of controversy.

Of all kinds of writers none are so unwearied in their vocation as political scribes. Habituated to controversy, they exult in disputation. They asperse where they cannot confute; they deride where they cannot overcome. After a number of years they become callous even to the most hostile criticism. Never smarting under defeat, to combat and to conquer appear to them identical. Rebounding from every overthrow with untiring nerves and audacious front, they taunt their con-

queror, and again challenge him to the fray. They resolve never to acknowledge a defeat, so long as they can employ woman's miserable privilege of having the last word.

The strongest exception to Mr. Croker's writings is, not so much their deficiency in original suggestiveness and want of profound thought, as that they essentially misrepresented the genuine tone of the Conservatives of England. The gentlemen of England can, when provoked, play their part in a fight as well as, if not better, than others; and it is because they are manly and bold, that they dislike what is habitually sour, peevish, or splenetic. Nor do they look upon all society from that class-point of view which might be inferred from Mr. Croker's writings. They never asked particularly into the antecedents of Mr. Croker when they accepted the aid of his abilities; but, from the pervading tone of his articles, it might be supposed that they were hostile to the rise of men without an ancestor. Too much of the style of Silverforkton politics was in all Mr. Croker's productions; and the wretched aphorism "That nothing good can come out of Bloomsbury," might be printed as an epigraph to his essays. There was no genial love for the people, or cordial sympathy with their aspirations, in his writings.

Pugnacity, not philanthropy, was apparently his animating motive ; and we may see in our own day how such a spirit is quite alien from the feeling of a gentry which earnestly strives to legislate for the weak, the helpless, and forgotten. It may also be observed that, unlike the case of other political writers of notoriety, Mr. Croker never founded any school ; and in literature and painting there is no more decisive proof of conspicuous merit than becoming an exemplar. Bolingbroke, Swift, Burke, Junius, all had their avowed imitators.

The fact that Mr. Croker had no imitators would seem to suggest that his merits were mingled with many faults. His fierce attacks were not sufficiently relieved by the mirth and humour which impart geniality to composition, and amuse those who are careless about the issues of debate. In his early days youthful vivacity gave something of a joyous tone to his satirical effusions. Thus, when he criticised the Dublin actors in his " Familiar Epistles," the severe was set off with the jocose, and the tartness of his strictures was forgotten in his airy manner. So, when he drew the ludicrous picture of a subaltern actor of the name of Williams, he showed that he could mingle together the comical and caustic :—

“Next Williams comes, the rude, the rough,
With face most whimsically gruff:
Aping the careless sons of Ocean,
He scorns each fine and easy motion;
Tight to his sides his elbows pins,
And dabbles with his hands like fins.
Would he display the greatest woe,
He slaps his breast, and points his toe.
Is merriment to be exprest?
He points his toe, and slaps his breast.
His turns are swings, his touch a thump,
His feelings fits, his step a jump.
And, violent in all his parts,
He speaks by gusts, and acts by starts!”

But as he grew older he became much more fierce and far less funny, and articles from his mordant pen evidently were composed under the delusion of mistaking the bitter for the brilliant, written with the purpose of a satirist, but exhibiting only the performance of a scold.

Yet it would be unjust to throw upon Mr. Croker all the faults of his peculiar style. He first became a writer in days when between the hostile camps in politics there was not the decorous amenity of later times. The demagogues and the popular debating societies of forty years since were coarse, scurrilous, and downright

savage in their tone ; the Court was unhappily rife with scandals ; and personality, supported by facts, and intensified with virulent insinuations, was systematically used by avowed incendiaries and malignant conspirators against the Constitution. Against such noxious pests of the State rose-water would have been innocuous ; they were encountered with effusions as unsavoury and more efficacious than their own ; and the proverb about those who spar with the sable climbers of chimnies was shewn to be applicable to the professional critics who choose for their special pursuit the writing down of bravos in an opposing host. After a few years, fancy pictures them with a knife from the stall rather than with the rapier of the gallant.

From his earliest to his latest productions, there was an excess of moroseness in Mr. Croker. Even in his "Sketch of Ireland, Past and Present," there is a spirit of malign asperity which envenoms its most reflective passages. Disparagement and detraction were more natural to him than appreciation or the discovery of merit. His onslaught was formidable, and he was far abler in a bold attack than in conducting a difficult defence. He was, for many years, greatly dreaded on account of his command of various organs, and his venom-

dropping pen. He was what he aspired to be—a literary terrorist.

Yet sharper and stronger things were said against him than ever he ventilated of others. When Cumberland the dramatist (author of the “West Indian”) was behind the scenes one night at the fashionable little amateur theatre near Tottenham Court got up by Colonel Greville and others, Mr. Croker was rattling away with his gossip and his satirical tattle about the town as it was then (1810.) He enjoyed some distinction as having just been successful in Parliament, and in being reputed to possess considerable literary powers. “He’s only,” said Cumberland, “a *talking potato* ;” and the epithet adhered to Mr. Croker for life. His pugnacity was of the gladiatorial kind, and he enjoyed a quarrel as if it was pastime. He assailed Lady Morgan with great severity ; but she repaid him with compound interest in her picture of the adventurer “Conway Crawley.” Dr. Maginn, also, inflicted on him serious wounds.

When Maginn first came to London, he brought letters of introduction to Mr. Croker from some of the most eminent of the Fellows at Trinity College, Dublin, where Maginn had signalised himself by his classical attainments. Mr. Croker

saw Dr. Maginn at the Admiralty, and asked him to dine with him, naming the day. Maginn consented; but as chance would have it, on the identical day, a great Tory Peer asked himself to dine with Mr. Croker, who, of course, did not like to put him off. He wished to write to Maginn, to give him choice of another day; but he could not find Maginn's address. At first, he was annoyed, as he doubted whether Maginn would be suitable for his noble guest. However, there was nothing for it but to receive Maginn, and Mr. Croker, who piqued himself on his skill in keeping people down, resolved to give Maginn a hint to hold his tongue, if he talked too much. Now Maginn was just as fond of a good talk as Mr. Croker, for he excelled at out-pouring as well as down-pouring. He came from Cork, and Mr. Croker came from Galway; and Maginn had not the slightest idea of being silenced by any Galway man that ever lived. But he soon saw through Mr. Croker's sharply significant hints. He was to take no more of the conversation, though he might of the wine. "Agreed," said the Doctor to himself, who resolved quietly to bide his time. The conversation turned on the proper way of calling a peer, whether he should take his title from a castle or a locality of some kind, or whether

he might be created by his family name. Opinions differed, and Mr. Croker gave his view on it with habitual self-confidence. "For my part," said the Secretary to the Admiralty, "Lyneham is the place where the Crokers were first settled, and if I am made a peer, I shall have myself gazetted, not as Lord Croker, but as Lord Lyneham." No sooner were the words out of Mr. Croker's lips, than Maginn jumped up in ecstasy, and roared out, "Stop—stop—stop, Mr. Croker!" The company were amazed; and then, fixing his eyes on his host, the humourist exclaimed, "Don't do that—don't do that, Mr. Croker; for you'd then have to be re-gazetted as Lord *Penny-a-line-'em!*"

And for some time, Maginn was one of the most formidable and damaging of the multitude of personal enemies that Mr. Croker raised up to himself. At the time of the Reform Bill, however, Maginn did full justice to Mr. Croker's talents.

Mr. Croker's habit of finding fault with petty details, and failing in many cases to rise to a level with the argument on a great subject, was effectually satirised in "Coningsby." Any one else would have been tortured by such a work, but it is doubtful whether Mr. Croker himself writhed under it. "Croker," it was once said to me,

“never can be crushed from the Autæan impudence with which he can rise after every knock down. There is in him a rich stock of natural arrogance, which will discount any drafts that may be drawn upon it. He has more coarse audacity than all living public characters put together, and it is the only thing in which he rises into genius. If he had the ordinary feelings of a man, he would have died under the *Rigby* attack.”

And upon Mr. Croker’s critical pretensions, the same accomplished person remarked, “Show him a race-horse, and he’d go look for a flea in his hide.”

The laceration in “Coningsby” undoubtedly did great damage to Mr. Croker’s political vogue. It exposed all the ludicrously weak points of his style, and his “slashing articles” became less thought about. His connexion with the Marquis of Hertford, and other circumstances, lowered him still further, and his reputation as a political oracle was virtually destroyed by the conduct of the Duke of Wellington and Sir R. Peel, about Protection in 1846. It was then seen that the “we” of Mr. Croker had no representative significance of what was passing at Walmer Castle, or Drayton Manor. Then came the publication of Lord Macaulay’s “History of England,” and never did a professed

critic so completely shatter his reputation as Mr. Croker, by the miserable way in which he tried to disparage a performance of surpassing merit. Critics who dislike the too constant use of the high colour style in history, and who doubt whether the pictorial ought to be substituted for the philosophical method of writing narratives, felt that Mr. Croker was not equal to the self-imposed task of depreciation of the author whom he wished to injure. He sought to blast the favour of the work, but his malice was not supported by adequate ability. "Croker," said Mr. Rogers, "went out intending to be guilty of a foul murder, and he committed suicide."

But the posthumous assault upon the character of Thomas Moore damaged Mr. Croker even more than the failure of his attack on Lord Macaulay. It was a terrible spectacle to see an old man on the verge of eternity, truculently and ferociously trampling upon the grave of one who had been his friend for many years. Granted that Mr. Croker had something to complain of in Moore; granted that the poet was insincere in his professions of regard, were these reasons which, as a man or a professing Christian, could justify Mr. Croker in using all his personal knowledge of Moore's whole life and conduct, and writing

as if from a brief of fifty years preparation, and smiting with all his power the memory of one who was no longer able to answer for himself? We pray in the Liturgy to be delivered by the Omnipotent "from envy, malice, hatred, and all uncharitableness," and the ferocious spirit which dictated every page against Moore, shocked all society, and loud and long was the indignant reclamation against that last act of Mr. Croker's eruption of self-degrading spleen.

Not a few there were who while the town was discussing the whole subject of Moore and Croker, reverted to Lady Morgan's picture of *Conway Crawley*, in her novel of "Florence Macarthy," and many quoted the epitaph that was inscribed on the tombstone* of Edwin, the comedian, in St. Werburgh Church-yard, at Dublin. Those records of Mr. Croker's peculiar style would be too severe for reprint here, but it is remarkable that the late Thomas Barnes, the distinguished editor of the "Times," in his spirited collection of "Parliamentary Portraits," warned Mr. Croker of the number of enemies that he would create

* The epitaph is printed at full length in Whitelaw and Walsh's "History of Dublin," and it is alluded to in Gilbert's "Streets of Dublin." For Conway Crawley, *vide* "Florence Macarthy," vol. II. p. 66.

by the excessive arrogance of his deportment. "My quarrel with Mr. Croker," wrote Mr. Barnes in 1815, "is not on account of his pedigree, but for the arrogance of his manners, entirely unbecoming in any man, and least of all suited to one of his small pretensions. I object to that defying tone which seems to wish to provoke, to that sore manner which implies a consciousness that what he says ought to offend, and therefore anticipating that anger as a shield," and again "His manner is of all others most calculated to make enemies."*

It was in 1831-2 that Mr. Croker most favourably displayed his powers. In discussing the details of the Reform Bill, he showed all the resources of an able committee-man, and in

* Mr. Barnes says, "Mr. Ponsonby, on one occasion, silenced him by a furious rebuff, and, on another occasion, Sir Francis Burdett, with his gentlemanly coolness, contrived a few words whose united force seemed to sting him to the very quick." (Parliamentary Portraits, pp. 124 and 126-7). He predicted "that the day would come when Mr. Southey may blush to have received the patronage of Mr. Croker;" and, in his correspondence, it is curious that Southey feelingly records how grievously he had been injured by the public erroneously attributing to him some of the most envenomed of Rigby's "slashing articles," of which he had never written a line.

general debate, he argued with great breadth of thought. He did not idly declaim against all Reform, but he discussed the Ministerial scheme from a party point of view, and contended with great force that the measure was "uni-lateral," and did not recognise the constitutional balance of party. That he showed an unexpected stock of debating talent cannot be denied. Many of the literary Tories used to attack Mr. Croker, but when his abilities shone forth, they refrained from assailing him, and praised him ardently, notwithstanding their personal dislike of him. He had, in the earlier part of his career shown, at various times, considerable powers of speech, and he had been anxious to put himself forward in general debate ; but the Tory chiefs, it is said, did not wish that he should come out too prominently. He was placed in a difficulty. He had even mentioned, on a memorable occasion, in the rooms of one of his leading political supporters, in Trinity College, Dublin, that " he was not worth one guinea more at that time than when he entered the House of Commons." This statement was made while engaged in settling his worldly affairs, preparatory to an anticipated duel. Since he could not afford to resign his post, he was obliged (like some of his predecessors and

his successors) to cultivate a talent for silence. In order to acquire political importance, he aimed at the representation of Dublin University, and, for many years, he carried on a zealous opposition to the claims of Mr. Plunket, and, in his electioneering contests, Mr. Croker displayed abundance of courage and cleverness in the face of formidable adversaries.

When he became entitled to his pension, he retired from office, and finding himself independent, and Member for Dublin University, he spoke under the inspiration of freedom, and he was enabled to do full justice to his powers. It is allowed even by his satirist to "Rigby," that he possessed "a clear head, indefatigable industry, and an audacious tongue"—qualities invaluable to a leading Oppositionist in an excited time. He had, also, an immense variety of miscellaneous knowledge fit for illustrating general principles, and he closely grappled in discussion with his opponents, and defended his cause with remarkable energy.

On one occasion during the Reform Bill debates, Mr. Croker had considerable success as an alarmist by the use he made of the facts of Charles the First's reign. He reasoned skilfully upon mode-

ration passing into violence, peaceful innovation terminating in social revolution, Pym and Hampdens ending with Ludlows, Cromwells, &c. He worked up his matter well, and produced great effect, but it was short-lived. While he was speaking, Mr. Stanley, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, sent to the Library for Hume's History of England, and he presented to the House another view of the reign of Charles the First from that drawn by Mr. Croker. Appealing to the Tory historian as an authority, Mr. Stanley showed how Charles broke the law and brought his ruin upon himself; some of Mr. Croker's facts he overturned, while from others he drew different inferences, and he confuted the Quarterly Reviewer with a dazzling display of extemporaneous argument, that delighted the House by its surprising readiness. Few speeches ever made in Parliament were so successful as that reply by Mr. Stanley.

Mr. Croker, certainly, had the "persevering will" noted by M. Guizot. In 1832 he spoke still better, and as a debater discussing a momentous change in the construction of the House of Commons, he rose to a level with his subject. His arguments were far more able and masterly

than those delivered on the same subject by Sir Robert Peel. His point of view was this:—either the Bill would produce a revolution or not; then he would take the first possibility, and dwell upon it for some time; next he would take the supposition that the Bill should not eventuate in revolution; but in that case how would the country be governed? He argued that by the Bill the whole power would be thrown into the hands of the towns, and that the Liberal Party would be installed in Parliamentary ascendancy, and that the balance of Party would be completely overthrown, and that thus the Bill would soon paralyse the healthy action of the Constitution.

His closing great speech on the third reading of the Reform Bill in 1832, was certainly a very fine, and most impressive specimen of Parliamentary eloquence. It had strong argument, a broad and bold appeal to history and experience, and along with its generalisation there was an adroit use of details. The tone of the speech was grave, and worthy of a senator roused by a great occasion. It was delivered with the moral emphasis that comes from earnestness. His description of a foreigner who had heard of English

peace and tranquillity, and who came to London for the first time in 1832, was well imagined, and executed with great play of satirical fancy. The astonishment of the foreigner at finding Apsley House with its windows broken, was cleverly put. "What tyrant dwelt there? what cruel oppressor of the country?" "It was no oppressor, that house was the residence of the saviour of the nation—*le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*, the Duke of Wellington." The foreigner was then supposed to ask about several other houses. He was depicted as standing before a great mansion which had been damaged: "Ah, well, there is the house of some bloated aristocrat, some mercenary landlord, some oligarch who has fattened in office." "Not so, that house belongs," said Mr. Croker, "to the pride of British commerce, to the first merchant in the world." Mr. Alexander Baring, (the late Lord Ashburton) was sitting near Mr. Croker at the time; his house had been attacked by the mob, he had four votes, and he was wavering at the time, (it was said) how they should be given. Nothing could be better executed for effect on society than the lively picture of the foreigner's walk in London. It was a choice piece of rhetoric.

So, also, his allusion to Cromwell was well imagined and skilfully introduced. "Count the number of days from the time when this House assumed the whole power of the State, until the hour when one of its former members Oliver Cromwell, cried (pointing to the Speaker's, mace upon the table) 'Take away that bauble!'" This passage produced great effect in delivery, and the speech read with much effect through the country.

Mr. Croker at that time became a chief amongst the Tories. He strongly advised constitutional resistance, and urged them to fight the Bill to the last stage. His exertions injured his health, and he overworked especially in struggling against the Irish Reform Bill. He was unused to so exciting a life, and it was no wonder that he strained himself by the pertinacity of his opposition. He made a rash vow that he would never sit in a Reformed Parliament, and he kept it, though the Tories would have given him a seat in 1833. But he was spirit-broken, wearied, disappointed, dejected, and disgusted. He became more morose than ever, and his mind was infected with morbidness. His despondency was the source of mirth to some persons. He was as peevish and politically miser-

able as a snuff-taker, who suddenly found that the tobacco plant had been radically abolished together with Gatton and Old Sarum. The Marquis Wellesley made game of him as "Croker in a state of sanguine despondency." He had predicted it all ; he had told them the country would be ruined, and was he not right ? Was it not truly lamentable ? The Constitution had been destroyed ! The Revolution of France was to be acted over again, &c. &c. The Duke of Wellington was for a time rather bitten with the mania of Mr. Croker, and so was Lord Lyndhurst. His boding notes were heard as oracular, and politicians of the old school listened to him with the sympathy of sorrow. Lord Eldon was effete ; Mr. Croker was energetically lachrymose ; the owl had dropped down, and the raven had taken its place upon the perch. Toryism was thinking about its funeral.

But Peel did not despair. He thought that the Whigs were living too fast, and that their system would wear itself out. He knew that the people of England liked Order as much as Liberty, and he did not despair of the cause of his party, or his country. But Mr. Croker lived in his library, and made himself melancholy by trying to consume

his own thoughts, and by endeavouring to digest the venom of his spleen. He became a lugubrious pamphlet-maker, and called himself an essayist. He grasped for a season the dictatorship of a great periodical organ, and wailed forth his melancholy "we," affecting to be the Cassandra of Conservatism. While it was supposed that he held telegraphic and confidential communication with Walmer, and Drayton, and Burleigh, and Belvoir Castle, Knowsley, and Netherby, his "we" told upon passing opinion, but that illusion vanished as years went by.

Vivida Vis was the nickname given to Mr. Croker in "Vivian Grey," and it happily indicates his faculty. From first to last he had great activity; he was various, light, and poignant; he could use argument and ridicule against an adversary; he had facility both as a speaker and a writer, and his knowledge of affairs was wide. He was, also, entitled to the honour due to political consistency, a virtue in this "shuffling and equivocating age," almost as forlorn as moderation was in 1831-2. He was no trimmer, no renegade, no double dealer, no intriguer with adversaries. To his political flag he was faithful for fifty years. He started in politics as a

literary Pittite, and he was one to the last. He honestly dreaded "democracy," and he was sincere in his tremors before bugbears; on the Church his ideas were frigid, and meagre, the commonplace sentiments of one, who might have been satisfied with Paley's views; to the Catholics of Ireland his tone was friendly, and he desired that their Clergy should be paid by the State, and he was no panegyrist of the Protestant Ascendancy, for in significant words he said, "A landlord is not a mere land-merchant; if he has rents to receive, he has duties to perform &c."* In English politics he did not appreciate the curious complexity of our society, and the way in which even in our democratic towns one class acts upon another. Neither did he understand how really averse the masses are to whatever throws them out of employment. The advance of the working people in virtue, sobriety and intelligence, he did not perceive, and the mental atmosphere in which his brain thought and toiled was darkened by the clouds and phantoms suggested by the chance

* *Vide* "Sketch of Ireland, Past and Present." The sentiment quoted in the text was afterwards used by Under-Secretary Drummond, "Property has its duties as well as its rights."

of another French Revolution. The spiritual parts of Toryism he could no more comprehend, than a deaf man could appreciate the compositions of Mozart or Beethoven.

The reverence for days of yore, the sacredness of old recollections, the charm that time gives to a name, or an institution, and the way in which the hard conclusions of the head are swayed by the generous swell of the retrospective affections, those soul-stirring feelings were beyond the range of his mental vision. He would have scoffed at reasoning about "the poetry of politics," and yet there was a contemporary writer who did more permanent service to the cause of Toryism in its worthiest sense than a hundred Crokers could have done. There was a writer who described bygone ages with magical effect, and who made the past predominate over the present in many a household ; there was a genius, who made people think of their forefathers, and taught a rushing and angry age to pause and affectionately look back on other times, and who quickened the sympathies of humanity by the portraiture of the noble and the chivalrous ; and he, too, was a Quarterly Reviewer—he was Walter Scott. Pity it was that the Conservative Party

had for a season of years been left to the influence of a controversial writer, so harsh, so soured, so morbid, so intensely ungenial as Mr. Croker ! Pity it was that more wholesome and sanguine natures had not been intrusted with the important literary office of counselling and encouraging the drooping spirits of Conservatism !

But a creed Mr. Croker had—narrow, meagre, and shallow ; but still it was a creed, clear, and distinctly marked, and he kept it. He did not play fast and loose with his convictions ; such as they were, he was satisfied with them, and never doubted of their truth ; and he toiled for them with an energy that never tired, and a political bigotry that never wavered. He was clever, but he was not creative ; he was active, but he was not original ; he had talent, but he had not genius ; he had abundance of brains, but he wanted soul ; and wanting soul, a political writer cannot rouse the public passions. “ If he had virtue,” said M. de Tocqueville, in the French Academy, “ Napoleon would have been the greatest man that ever lived ;” and if Mr. Croker had had a generous heart, with his talents he might have been a great political writer.

When a Right Honourable gentleman of the

old Tory school lamented not long since, "We miss those articles that used to be in the Quarterly long ago. I assure you that they did a great deal of good, and kept a check upon the Whigs:" his statement was questioned by a still more experienced judge of political effect, and it was rightly answered. "The times now are different. Social questions are what press for solution, and these must be treated sympathetically. The age has entirely outgrown that small activity on which Mr. Croker chiefly prided himself. Religious questions, and the phases of society dependant on the Church and Dissent should be treated with a temper quite opposed to Wilson Crokerism. The ascendancy of the Whigs, and the social development of town-life in the North of England, require science, skill, and philosophy of another sort than that which Mr. Croker could apply;" and the advice against any resurrection of Wilson-Crokerism was sound and sagacious.

For it must be observed that the writings of Mr. Croker and of censors of the same sort, are dangerous weapons for Conservatives to employ. Writings put forward in the Conservative interest cannot possibly receive as general a cir-

ulation as those in the popular organs. But independantly of that objection, a fierce, arrogant, disputatious temper, and an excess of personality if used to advance Conservatism, must in the long run prove most injurious. The violence and scurrility of Conservatism would, in that case, be appealed to as precedents for the excesses of Radical and democratic papers. It was so at the time of the Reform Bill; much of the public press in that day was coarse, unscrupulous, and fiercely personal; but the Whigs silenced Tory objectors by referring to compositions which had been circulated under the literary coalition of official persons and Theodore Hook. The *John Bull* seemed in the first year to have done the Tory Party much service, and to have frightened the Whigs by its terrorism; but in a decade of ten years the Tories were heavy losers by the indirect sanction which they had given it, between 1821 and 1827, the period in which the Whig aristocracy, male and female, were subjected to the horrors of an Inquisition.

On the whole, Mr. Wilson Croker was not a classical specimen of that school of composition which aims at what is called "writing down." He always went too far, and he often gave chances

to his antagonists by the fury of his attack. The distinction between a dealer in scandal and a satirist was repeatedly overlooked by him; he played *Snake* too often, while he piqued himself upon being a *Sneerwell*; his malice was prolix and musty, and he seemed ignorant that English society insists most properly that there must be practically a statute of limitation against the resurrection of old scandals. Even in his favourite vocation as a sarcastic writer, he was far from reaching the highest rank, though he laboured in his excruciating pursuit for forty years. Amongst the worst of his most disagreeable articles was his malign attempt to heap a pile of dirt upon the grave of the gifted Sheridan, and the words of that great genius exquisitely satirise the manner in which Mr. Croker discharged his unpleasing labours, "He generally designed well, had a fierce tongue, and a bold invention, but his colouring was too dark, and his outlines often extravagant. His scandalous commentaries wanted delicacy of tint and mellowness of sneer;" and of the prolonged exposure he made of himself as a composer of "slashing articles," it can only be said in the words of Sheridan, "It is possible that he appeared more ill-natured than he

really was, and that he had not malice at heart ; but such a plea could only be treated with contempt, for nothing could excuse the intemperance of his tongue and his pen but a natural and uncontrollable bitterness of mind."

And that "uncontrollable bitterness" it was, which jaundiced his views of men and things, and made him blind as a political observer. On thinking over his career, its great opportunities, and his undeniable abilities resulting in laurels already upon the sere and in a sinister celebrity, the words of Shakespeare are recalled, deserving the grave consideration of all who address the world at large either with tongue or pen,—

" Oft it chances in particular men,
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,
As in their birth, (wherein they are not guilty
Since Nature cannot choose its origin,)

*By the o'er growth of some complexion
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason,
Or by some habit, which too much o'er leavens,
The form of plausible manners—that these men,
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect
Being nature's livery, or fortune's star,
Their virtues else (be they as pure as grace,
As infinite as man can undergo),
Shall in the general censure take corruption,*

*From that particular fault, the dram of base,
Doth all the noble substance often dout
To his own scandal.*”*

Mr. Croker was a *Red Indian* in critical literature, and his memory is buried under a pyramid of scalps.

* Hamlet, Act 1, Scene 4.

CHAPTER V.

LORD MACAULAY.

THE son of the well-known humanitarian, an associate of Wilberforce, young Thomas Babington Macaulay started in the world with far better resources than is generally supposed. His family had eminent connections, and an influential position, and ranked worthily in Leicestershire. Of Scotch extraction, it had settled in England, and thriven so prosperously that young Macaulay on entering into life had not to undergo that terrible apprenticeship which so often grinds down men of genius into mere mediocrities. Society, and that of the best kind, was open to him; and it is impossible to listen to the flow of interesting gossip that pours from him in conversation, without being frequently reminded that when scarcely out of his teens he was brought

into association with many of the first celebrities in England. The difficulties in his path were as nothing compared to the obstacles that lay before Burke, Sheridan, and others. Master of all his time, he had never, like Sheridan, to write for his personal wants; or, like Burke, to drudge for Dodsley on a miserable pittance.

He graduated at Cambridge at a time when the attention of leading politicians was fixed on the Universities. Those were days when the war of politics was carried on by weapons of brighter polish and keener temper, than are used in battles where the O'Connells and the Cobdens conquer Wellingtons and Peels by organized force and seditious clamour. Then was the time when the opposing arguments of politics were sustained by the intellects of the gifted and the wise—when Cannings and Plunkets, Copleys and Broughams, held enthralled the silent Senate, before Parliament was threatened with being vulgarised to the level of the Marylebone Vestry.

“The Union” at Cambridge was then in its best period. Crowded audiences were attracted by debates in which many living persons of eminence first distinguished themselves. Nor was it only in mimic combats of politics that the leading students displayed their talents. In Knight's

“Quarterly Magazine” they appealed to the public to endorse the verdict passed upon them by their friends. Fluent, animated, and argumentative upon his legs in the “Union,” in the pages of “Knight’s” young Macaulay displayed all the marked features of that altisonant style which, with its euphonious cadences and gorgeous diction, has bound so many readers in its fascinating spells. Francis Jeffrey read his essays with admiration, and Henry Brougham exulted over the shrill but sincere eulogies which the heir of Earl Grey poured forth upon Zachary Macaulay’s brilliant and accomplished son. At Freemason’s Tavern, the “Abolitionists” cheered to the echo the rapidly-rolling rhetoric that poured from his lips ; and in society he was complimented on his college honours, his clever essays, his spirited ballads, and the notice accorded to him by leading politicians.

Invited by Jeffrey to become a contributor to the “Edinburgh,” young Macaulay’s fortune was decisively made by “the Milton article.” Jeffrey had always been neat, correct, sparkling, clear, but superficial ; his style scintillated, but never blazed. Mackintosh was profound but ponderous ; his philosophy had a fatal laxity that palsied the nervous vigour of his style ; in the Commons his

rhetoric rumbled along with a guttural Scotch accent: he exhausted superlatives in saying kind things of every one; while in metaphysical language that appeared to hide original thought, he echoed what Brookes's proposed and Burlington House accepted.* Hallam, deep in books, was not dazzling as a writer; and, although he excelled all mankind in the art of throwing cold water upon illustrious reputations, he never succeeded as a reviewer. Brougham wrote articles in a style that proved him an adept in rhetorical artifice. He clothed common-places with the costume of oratory, assumed the profound with an oracular gravity that amused nobody more than that excellent personage himself, and assailed Tory peers with the scowling and sarcastic style of literary *nisi prius*. Sydney Smith, like one of Shakspeare's fools in a cassock, was always droll and often dazzling. Shaking his cap and bells under the laurels of genius (never under a mitre), he tickled Methodists to death out of pure humanity, and rattled down man-traps and spring-guns under volleys of epigrams. But not one of these brilliant persons, nor all of them

* "The first political meeting I ever attended was at Burlington House. My Lords Grenville and Grey addressed the Lords, and Mr. Ponsonby and Mr. Tierney addressed the Commons."—*Lord J. Russell*.

together, could write an essay like that on "Milton," where, amidst the tropical fertility of its metaphors, and the tangled luxuriance of its flowery rhetoric, an original perception of the picturesque, and genius for producing it in words, is visible in every page.

If Lord Macaulay had then been a man entirely unconnected, like a Hazlitt or a Giffard, or other professional writers, he might have waited for many years before he was placed in Parliament. But from his personal connections, he had the entrance already to the high circles of his party. Lord Lansdowne had an hereditary love for the patronage of distinguished talents, and Calne returned the eloquent essayist to the Commons. The Reform Bill came on, and the bitterest of "Quarterly" was pitted against the most brilliant of the Edinburgh Reviewers. Wonders were expected from the tongue of the new recruit. Ardent Liberals boasted that their cause would be adorned by one who, with the faculty of Burke for generalisation, would exhibit the muscle of Brougham in close encounter, and fascinate St. Stephen's with language as glowing as Canning had displayed, and subdue its convictions with argument as overwhelming as Plunket had employed.

His first displays could scarcely be ranked with the masterpieces of parliamentary eloquence, and disappointed some whose expectations had been too highly raised. His figure was short, his elocution monotonous, his voice harsh, and his general manner partaking of a public lecturer. Though his speaking was rapid, it resembled the swiftness of the stream that issues from the ponded waters rather than the rush of the mountain torrent bursting naturally from the Highland tarn. His speeches suggested the idea that he applied his own radiant rhetoric to the philosophy of others; as if the thoughts of Fox, Burke, Hallam, Mackintosh, and the *Edinburgh Review* had been passed under a rhetorical rolling-machine and drawn out stamped with Lord Grey's Reform patterns. He never crushed an adversary in close conflict, and left him prostrate in debate like Mr. Stanley in his famous encounter with Mr. Croker; and even Sir Robert Peel's subordinate talent for the satirical was often effective against the oracular manner of the member for Calne.

His defect as an orator was more manifest from the contrast with two of his fellow members in the Commons. Then (1831-2) might be seen, night after night, the internecine contest between the

greatest demagogue of modern times, and a masculine patrician, ready in tongue and resolute in purpose. Then was that famous tribune, the boast of the Irish bar, and potent ruler for twenty years of Celtic Ireland, doomed for the first time to meet, in the heir to the house of Derby, an oratorical antagonist as rapid and fluent as himself, as powerful to rouse the manly passions of an audience, as forcible and far more finished in invective. What chance for a moment would the glancing foil of the great reviewer have had against the club of O'Connell, wielded with gigantic power and practised ease? Against the onslaughts of the Celtic chief, and the elaborate tirades of Mr. Sheil, Mr. Macaulay, in 1833, was called on to show his powers. Though our sympathies were entirely with him on that occasion, we must say that he failed. He could attitudinise like the best of political athletes, but he wanted the stern resolve and sinewy muscle which prostrate the sturdy foe.

Yet his speeches on Reform were very brilliant performances of a particular kind. For the first time it might be said that the House listened to a mere "essayist." Though his thinking was not so original as that of Burke, his manner was better, his elocution more smooth, and his voice had not the coarseness of the Irish accent. His

speeches on Reform were heard with attention, loudly cheered, eagerly read, and applauded by Ministers. Their effect upon the fortunes of the eloquent speaker was humorously recorded by one of his contemporaries. When a philosophical Radical was talking all the obvious commonplaces that a cavilling critic might apply to the great essayist, Mr. Sheil, screeched out in his rasping voice, "Nonsense, sir! don't attempt to run down Macaulay. He's the cleverest man in Christendom. Didn't he make four speeches on the Reform Bill, and get ten thousand a year? Think of that—and be dumb!" Promoted to the Indian Council, he had leisure for his literary pursuits, and continued those charming essays with which his name will be permanently linked, whatever may be the estimate passed on him as a historian, when the voice of contemporary cliques is mute, and when admiration can be extorted only by the genuine and true.

Of all who wrote in the *Edinburgh Review*, not one contributor stamped his compositions with such inimitable workmanship. The articles were often unequal in power of statement and weight of matter; but they were uniform in brilliancy, and in the resources of a style that could decorate the superficial and hide the sophistical

with varied graces, with ingenuity of thought, and variety of allusion, with sparkling fancies, and a sonorous arrangement of words that titillated the ears with luscious cadences. He sparkled over the "Utilitarian Controversy" with the flippancy of Voltaire writing of geology, or Lord Jeffrey discussing the anatomy of the brain. He castigated the faults of Dryden, and feebly acknowledged his merits, in a manner that deserves to be forgotten by all except his critics. From the French Revolution he sought to extract as much literary capital as Mr. Croker himself, and, while the latter sought to terrify the commercial classes with tales of terror, Lord Macaulay rung the changes on the fall of the Faubourg St. Germain, for the special intimidation of the nobility of Old England. He scourged Horace Walpole, and sneered at Dr. Johnson with a one-sided severity not approved by the literary world. In his review of Dumont's "Mirabeau" he re clothed the greatest fallacies of Charles Fox. In his essay on "History," he gave a summary more picturesque than profound of the leading historians who have gained the approbation of ages, and he propounded his own theory of the art of narration.

His essay on "Bacon" is an agreeable biographical sketch, but in philosophic thinking it is

weak and unsatisfactory. It teaches little, suggests still less, and wants conclusive power. It appears to great disadvantage on comparison with the masterly analysis of the Baconian philosophy by Mr. Hallam. Along with other portions of his brilliant writings in which the flowers of his style hide his want of depth as a thinker, the article on "Bacon" may be cited as a proof that Lord Macaulay's generalisation is more artificial than real, and that he relies upon rhetoric to do the work of logic.

Up to the present time, we think the essays on "Clive" and "Warren Hastings" his best historical productions. The subjects were comparatively fresh, and his Oriental experience gave him the familiarity which produces mastery of a whole subject. "Clive," in our judgment, is the masterpiece of all his writings. It was in itself a subject so full of dark incidents, desperate fortunes, and romantic vicissitudes, that it required all the powers of a consummate colourist to realise. The character of Clive is there historically drawn, while his life is dramatically described. The essay on "Hastings" was also most interesting (though rather episodic) in its narrative, but too irresolute in its conclusions. It severely accused, and then sophistically absolved. Given great men,

brilliant effects, and questionable means, no one need ever doubt to which side Lord Macaulay's "historical" verdict will incline. If he had been a Frenchman he would have prostrated himself in literary idolatry of Richelieu, and Louis XIV., and Napoleon. He can, indeed, affect the impartial in his judgments, but it is only affectation. He tries every historical character suspected of "Toryism" by a code of Draco, and he puts in ingenious demurrers to every indictment against Whigs. He surveys centuries of British history through the prejudices of a party, sneers at the Church of England, vilifies Popery to-day like a Protestant zealot, and treats it to-morrow like a German latitudinarian. The last point to which we have just averted brings us to the most remarkable feature in Lord Macaulay's mode of thinking.

Expressing himself with the greatest vehemence on religious topics and constantly referring to them, it is utterly impossible to perceive what are Lord Macaulay's own opinions on sacred subjects. Assuredly we shall subject neither him nor any other man to inquisitorial scrutiny on that momentous subject; but, if a writer and speaker repeatedly introduces religious themes, we are justified in examining his system of opinion. If Voltaire had been writing a "History of England"

he could not have inflicted more cruel gashes upon our National Church than Lord Macaulay. On the other hand, the Society of Jesus could not have desired or devised a more dexterous panegyric on Romanism than the essay on Ranke's "History of the Popes." In his opening eulogium he writes of the Church of Rome—"She saw the commencement of all the governments and of all the establishments that now exist in the world, *and we feel no assurance that she is not destined to see the end of them all.*" Truly a most extraordinary sentence to have been penned by a British Protestant! But our wonder increases when he writes of the Romish faith in his "History of England," and there stigmatises it as "that gorgeous and fascinating *superstition*" over whose ruin in England he rejoices; while again in Parliament he vilified the Protestant Church of Ireland in language as reckless as if he were a "Young Irelander!"

The truth we take to be is, that on these and equally momentous subjects, Lord Macaulay has been accustomed to think merely like an orator. He looks only at the external aspects of institutions and systems, and considers them from a painter's and not a philosopher's point of view. To portray what appears to him, rather than to prove and

ascertain the positiveness of an idea or principle, is the natural function of his ultra-pictorial mind. Goethe looked on the men around him and on the phases of life with the perceptions of an artistic dramatist. Lord Macaulay regards society, and thinks upon the world's sublime and mysterious history, not as an investigator or an archæologist, but with the sentiments of a picturesque essayist. Effect—effect—effect—is the perpetual and almost the sole object of his aim. For his originality we must look to his style, not his spirit,—to his utterance, and not to his meditation. He is unrivalled in literature in placing in a striking way what has been known before. Thus when there is only talent in his thoughts, we see genius in his vivid words and suggestive diction. Assimilation and illustration are the main resources which he employs. Faded commonplaces he retouches with exquisite art, and the haggard wrinkles of senile Whiggery he rejuvenises with his literary pearl powder and rhetorician's rouge. A great master of language, he so writes, and often speaks, that while understood by his esoterical admirers who are initiated in his manner, he does not raise a murmur from the unsuspecting crowd, who have not sense to decipher his enigmatical ambiguities, and who

credulously revere his high-sounding rhetorical heroics for revelations of the profoundest philosophical importance !

It may here be objected by some of Lord Macaulay's admiring devotees, that authors, like painters, must be judged by their schools, and that, as we ought not to apply to a Venetian artist the rules appropriate to the school of Bologna, so we should not try Lord Macaulay by a criticism applicable to a more severe class of historians. To this we answer, that in "critical and historical" essays we must beware of analogy. The proprieties of painting are not applicable to the composition of prose : a painter addresses the eye, and endeavours to strike the imagination through that organ, whereas a historian addresses the understanding, and must inform it by a relation of the real, and not a mere pictorial counterfeit thereof. But the analogy would not serve the case of Lord Macaulay before a High Court of Criticism which formed its judgments, not from the multitudinous voices of the circulating libraries, but from the examples of the great historical masters who have during centuries won the approval of the impartial and profound. Neither in literature or painting has the ornamental school ever ranked in the first class. " Poetical orna-

ments," says Sir Joshua Reynolds, "destroy that air of truth and plainness which ought to characterise history." What would Sir Joshua have said if he saw a history in which the narrator, to tell of the fact that Charles the Second died, occupies several pages describing *the scene*, as if the mode of his dying, and the furniture of his chamber, were potential causes in the history of the Revolution of 1688? No doubt it is a very pretty mode of expression to represent Lord Macaulay as belonging to the Venetian school of historians, but such a classification, however ingenious, can scarcely be accepted in the criticism of literature. We believe, sincerely, that Lord Macaulay's impassioned tone,—his recurrent rhythms addressed to the ear,—his gorgeous diction,—his rhetorical artifices,—his study of manner to the neglect of matter,—produce serious evil amongst our rising school of writers. His style, brilliant, fascinating, popular, though it be, can be scarcely held up as a grand model of grave English prose. Its perpetual use of figures, its rhythmical cadences, its declamatory air of recitation, go far to Italianise it, and what its numerous imitators will gain in sonorous effect will be lost in moral strength. Truth of form will be sacrificed to brilliancy of fancy, vivacity will be thought more

important than reality—an oratorical tone will be adopted, and an inquiring habit of mind neglected. Careless of the permanent, authors will be satisfied with the effective; the applause of the throng will be counted more than the approval of the thoughtful. What happens in every day life occurs also in literature. The real corruptors of mankind are not the thoroughly depraved, but those who unite some great virtues with many imitable vices. What a crowd of ardent and inexperienced youths could be corrupted, not by Chartres, or Wilkes, or the old Duke of Queensberry, but by the brilliancy of profligates of genius like Wharton, Bolingbroke, and Charles Fox! So, in letters, it is those authors who mingle real powers with faults that can be followed, like Voltaire and others, who spread an epidemical taint by their success, at once charming readers and corrupting style.

On the sway of so fascinating a writer as Lord Macaulay, criticism is comparatively innocuous. His countless readers are enthralled by his witchery. I will cite two striking instances of his power.

“I do not know what we should have done but for ‘Macaulay’s Essays.’ We had an awful long passage. When all the books were read out we came back upon these Essays, and read them backwards and forwards

over and over, all in the ship. Oh! we never could have got on without them.”*

The above was said in a letter from an officer after a voyage to India.

“I dislike Lord Macaulay’s politics,” it was remarked to me by a Presbyterian divine, “and I dread his mode of thinking about religion, but what a writer! I came in from Service last Sunday at one o’clock and took up a book lying on my daughter’s table. I read, and read, and read, and when called away I was startled to find that it was five o’clock, and that I had neglected serious parochial business, and I had read all those Essays before!” The speaker was a fanatic in religion, and a Tory in politics.

Whatever may be the estimation formed of his literary abilities, it is evident that Lord Macaulay was never intended by nature for a man of action. A politician who looks on the world like an essayist cannot have that vigorous volition, that strenuous predominance of individuality, which rules men around him like some mysterious influence, and draws them on to follow. The world’s history is full of many instances in which the greatest celebrities have been almost solely indebted to *will* for their great achievements. Luther was often excelled as theologian, scholar, and writer; but whole colleges full of men like Erasmus, or some of our recent ambiguous theologians, could never have influenced the fate

* Vide “Sea Drift,” p. 233, by Admiral Robinson.

of Christendom like the mighty soul of Luther. In the cabinet and the field, Cromwell owed his predominance neither to originality of ideas nor to subtlety of conception, but to the transcendent energy of his resolution. So, in parliamentary history, Walpole, Chatham, and all the great celebrities of the Senate, have been distinguished for this towering faculty, which is as indispensable to a statesman as melody to a poet, or subtlety to a metaphysician. Wanting will, a man wants command; and, wanting command, a man may have knowledge, fine thoughts, and lofty aspirations, but he can never produce historical actions.

When Lord Macaulay consented, at a critical period in politics, to expatriate himself to India, he showed that he did not aim at a great political career. Affairs were at a crisis in 1833. Constitutional changes had proceeded too far. Reaction, according to the old normal law of English politics, was beginning to set in against Reform. When a levelling body of Radicals, aided by the anomalous Irish party (that has existed since '29), wanted to upheave the pillars of the Constitution, they were sturdily encountered by Lord Derby, the Duke of Richmond, and others. Lord Althorpe vacillated—the great body of the Liberals began to look about them for a leader—and Sir Robert Peel plucked up spirit. At such a time a

man with a fine genius for eloquence had an admirable opportunity for placing himself at the head of the independent English "Liberals," and becoming one of the powers of the State. Lord Macaulay preferred to go to India, realise an independence, and be a literary man in politics for the rest of his days. Try Lord Macaulay, as a man of action, upon the great questions since 1833, and it will be found that he adorned his party, rather than originated its views. He has always been a follower, never a leader—an echo, not an inspiration. "Nature," says Mr. Fonblanque, in his "England under Seven Administrations," "must have formed Mr. Macaulay for a trumpeter!" And in truth his talent in politics is more calculated to sound a flourish of victory than to mingle in the tumult of the fray. He has not a parental recollection of a single great measure, but he has expounded in splendid sentences the principles of others. Looking to the politicians of our own days, we can see that the Duke of Wellington, Earl Grey, Lord Palmerston, the Earl of Derby, Sir Robert Peel, Lord John Russell, Lord George Bentinck, Mr. Disraeli, Mr. O'Connell, all actually *did* some remarkable things which make part of the history of the age, whether their influences were right or wrong. But Lord Ma-

caulay has not actually carried anything in politics. No event has been decided by his counsel—no Cabinet has ever hung on his resolves. He never introduced a single measure of his own into Parliament; and, though he was prominently in political life for twenty-three years, he has never exhibited that independence of action which men like Burke and Sheridan showed when, in various instances, they refused to be dragged after their party. Some have thought it a misfortune in Lord Macaulay's case that he started in political life under patrician patronage. His stride would have been more manly, his port more resolute, if he had not been so much the follower of the great Whig families, whom he holds, as he himself says, "in reverence and honour." Whatever the Duke of Bedford, the Marquis of Lansdowne, and other great Whig magnates have resolved to do will never be opposed by Lord Macaulay. It is very curious, while England was heaving with agitation on the occasion of the Papal aggression, that Lord Macaulay was silent. He never uttered his "yea" or "nay." Every other public character of note proclaimed his opinion, but Lord Macaulay held his peace. Would a man of strong volition and decided convictions have been content to allow the

passions of the country to be excited without his expressing his opinion one way or the other?

Lord Macaulay could scarcely be called a statesman. He never led a connection in the House of Commons, nor did he ever stamp the passing politics of his time with convictions of his own. He railed against the Church of Ireland, but the Protestant sentiment of the empire is on the increase, notwithstanding the eloquent latitudinarianism of the brilliant essayist. In Parliament he spoke essays; he lectured on the past, rather than debated on the present. A brilliant illustrator of foregone conclusions, his politics wanted germinating force. There was vast cleverness in his language; there was little that was practical in his suggestions. What the decorator is to the architect, a political rhetorician is to the statesman. All the practical problems of the age Lord Macaulay left as he found them. Old and familiar principles he gracefully attired in the lacework and embroidery of his own picturesque style. In everything that came from his lips in Parliament there was brilliancy of manner; rarely any originality of matter.

Nor had Lord Macaulay any readiness in debate. He could not reply suddenly to an antagonist, and his speeches were almost as seasonable in one session as in another. By degrees the House of

Commons felt that the Member for Edinburgh was better fitted to comment on the past than to counsel on the present. Even admiring Whigs repeated Mr. Burke's saying as appropriate to Lord Macaulay :—" Retrospective wisdom and historical sagacity are things of excellent convenience, and serve admirably to reconcile the old quarrel between speculation and practice." He could dazzle and declaim, but he could neither create nor rule; he could always shine—he could never sway. Nature gave him the imagination of an artist, not the powerful volition of a ruling nature.

Yet it would be gross injustice to set down Lord Macaulay as a declaimer in politics. He took always a reasonable view of whatever case he spoke upon. His argument shone with the brilliance of genius, and his rhetoric was interwoven with all the ingenuity of thought. If not a statesman, he was heard as an elegant lecturer on statesmanship. " Always brilliant, often convincing," was the formula once applied to him by a most accomplished literary Whig, and his political career might be recorded under such a text.

It was supposed by many that Lord Macaulay would play a part in public similar to that of Burke. But no two men could be more unlike. Burke was a being of intensely passionate tempera-

ment; he was vehement and irascible, with the faults and virtues of a moral enthusiast. His convictions flashed into his mind, not only from the induction of his intellect, but from the intuition of his heart. The principles which guided his course were far larger and deeper than those conventional modes of Liberalism to which Lord Macaulay paid feudal homage. Burke was great as a man, as an orator, and as a writer. Mackintosh was not, perhaps, wrong in calling him "the greatest philosopher *in action* the world "ever saw." But action demands enthusiasm and a dominating will—a something (call it what you please) that can subvert or uphold—that can help to establish or overwhelm systems or empires. The greatest admirers of Lord Macaulay will say that such powers were not assigned to him.

It was for an author that he was specially designed, and his glorious successes with the pen have in some respects surpassed even the most glowing expectations ever formed of him. That fascination which he wanted as a speaker is ever present in him as a writer, and his dazzling triumphs in Literature will confer more enduring renown on his name, than any personal successes which he might have achieved in the Senate.

CHAPTER VI.

THE EARL OF CLARENDON.

A SHORT time previous to the concession of Catholic Emancipation, there was residing at Dublin a tall and slight young gentleman, with a certain elegance of air, not unmingled with a lassitude that might have arisen either from ill health, or from the satiety of a life of pleasure. His face was pale and delicate, his features were strikingly intellectual, with a general expression of shrewd sense joined to courtly mannerism. He was to be seen riding about by himself, and sometimes walking alone in the neighbourhood of the Custom House, that palatial triumph of the influence of John Beresford, and the skilful talents of Gandon. It was not easy to ascertain who was the elegant unknown, at whom the beauties of Gardiner Street discharged their inquisitive

glances in vain. He dressed with great care and taste, and there was an air of undoubted fashion about him that provoked the curiosity of observers. He was too lounging for a barrister—too dandified for a doctor—and yet as he did not flare forth in showy equipages, he could not be a man of fortune. Many there were who asked, and few could answer. He was not to be met with at the Merrion Square parties, or in general society; though some had a recollection—a faint one—of having seen him at the Castle. And so, time wore on—and the graceful stranger continued to ramble about by himself, and look as happy as his indifferent health would allow him, even though the whole of Merrion Square was ready to ignore his personal existence. At last, some penetrating persons discovered that the name of the elegant unknown was ‘Villiers,’ that he was highly connected with the English aristocracy, and that he held some place in the Custom House. This was but meagre information, but others ascertained not only his residence, but his origin and personal history. He answered to the sweetly-sounding name of George William Frederick Villiers; and it appeared, that he was the nephew of that once well-known fashionable notoriety, the Hon. John Villiers, a bosom friend and boon

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companion of George Prince of Wales, and a younger brother of that Earl of Clarendon, who was also one of the most constant associates of the Sardanapalus of England. The Villierses, Earls of Clarendon, it was further ascertained with little trouble, derive from one of the sons of the second Earl of Jersey, who married the grand-daughter of Lady Jane Hyde, daughter of Henry Hyde, the last Earl of Clarendon of the Hyde creation, and sister to the well-known Duchess of Queensbury. Thus it was established that the graceful stranger who had puzzled the Dublin folk was of high birth; and being a Villiers, it was not surprising that he should possess those pleasing qualities of insinuation and courtly grace for which all the branches of the House of Villiers have for generations been noted. It did not take away from the interest which he inspired to know that he was heir-presumptive to the Earldom of Clarendon, and that it was probable that he would one day bear a title ennobled beyond what kingly patent can confer by the lustre of the classic 'History of the Great Rebellion.' That very gentleman became in lapse of years, from being a Commissioner of Customs, Viceroy of Ireland, and Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs!

Highly intelligent and singularly industrious, he was well qualified for official labours. His mind had a fondness for minutiae, that found employment in the statistical and financial department of the Customs; and while he held the post, he deservedly earned the reputation of being a first-rate clerk—quite as good as Manchester or Liverpool could have sent, if the filling of the office had been left to those emporia of commerce. He had a taste also for acquiring information, and was not a mere clerk; and his acquaintance with the higher circles and the sentiment of aristocracy gave him that moderation of view which is essential to one destined to affairs. He occasionally went into the Court circles of the Castle, and amused himself by thinking of Gulliver and the Court of Lilliput. Shrewd, courteous, and thoroughly good natured, he gave a very favourable opinion of his character to the few whose intimacy he allowed at Dublin, while acting as Commissioner. He had a strong sense of the ridiculous, without carrying it so far as to become indurated with the habits of an *esprit moqueur*; which latter tendency virtually incapacitates a man for playing his part with sufficient gravity in the comedy of life.

Commissioner Villiers at first disliked Dublin

society, and led rather a retired life. The Court circle at the Castle was in those days rather narrow and bigotted. But while discharging his official duties, Mr. Villiers was brought into contact with a variety of persons—and amongst others, with an ambitious Whig attorney, who gave him a most lively account of a select circle of Whig wits and moderate Catholics, and persuaded the Commissioner to dine with him specially to meet the best of them.

This attorney was the celebrated Mr. Pierce Mahony, who, for many years, was a leading political agent to the Whig party in Ireland, and who possessed some remarkable talents. He was a capital man of business, and had, besides, many social and agreeable qualities. His great cleverness is registered by Sir Robert Peel's saying, in 1828, "that the only way of settling the Catholic Question effectually, would be for the Catholics to endeavour to get Mr. Pierce Mahony to put it into one of his private bills and smuggle it through Parliament." His achievements in carrying bills through the House of Commons, obtained for him the name of "*Bill Mahony*," and Sir Robert Peel called him "*Prospero*," one of the happiest of Sir Robert's strokes of rich humour. It was in his capacity of solicitor to the Provincial

Bank of Ireland, of which he was the founder, that Mr. Pierce Mahony was brought into acquaintance with Mr. Commissioner Villiers.

Among other houses at Dublin where the Commissioner was to be found, was the pleasant, lively, and hospitable mansion of Lady Morgan in Kildare Street. The receptions given by that sparkling writer were always agreeable. In those days, the *New Monthly Magazine* was written nearly entirely by a select circle of essayists and men of letters, who used to love to congregate in Lady Morgan's drawing-room, and stimulate their faculties by the coffee and conversation of their brilliant hostess. The lions, if not of the largest size, still formed a very noisy menagerie; and their roar was agreeably diversified with epigrammatic smartness, the scintillations of Irish fancy, and the humorous outpourings of Dublin drollery. There might be found of an evening the venerable Kirwan, wasted by delicacy till he seemed a creature of another world—the first of Irish chemists, not only in precedence, but in originality; and beside him might be observed a grand and massive form, surmounted by a noble head—that of Archibald Hamilton Rowan, a chivalrous and mistaken enthusiast in politics, whose name is embalmed in immortal eloquence by the tongue of Curran.

Standing near with sharp features and abstracted air, his eyes lustrous with spirit and intelligence, might be the son of the orator just named—William Henry Curran; whose delicate organization only prevented the world from knowing that the son inherited much of the genius of the sire.

With this circle of Dublin life open to him, and enjoying it much, Mr. Villiers had ample opportunities for exercising his keen faculties of observation. At that time his brother, the late Mr. Hyde Villiers, held an important post at the Ordnance,—and he was in constant official intercourse with the late Duke of Wellington, who distinguished him with his particular notice. Between the two brothers there was a prolonged and important correspondence on current affairs. The Duke of Wellington had an opportunity of seeing the Commissioner's letters written from Dublin at a most critical period—and Mr. Hyde Villiers was able to answer those letters with knowledge scarcely less interesting.

One night while the general circle were occupied with admiring Lady Morgan conversing in a leash of living languages, and decking them with quotations from the tongues of antiquity, Commissioner Villiers called into a corner a member of the Bar with whom he often conversed, and drew his

attention to the state of Catholic affairs. It was just after Peel had announced the change of the ministerial policy in 1829, and there was some division of opinion as to the course which should be pursued towards the Catholic Association—whether it should be put down simultaneously with the Act of Emancipation, or whether the Catholic body was to be allowed to act as it chose. Mr. Hyde Villiers had written over to the Commissioner a letter in which it was most urgently recommended that the Catholic Association should, if possible, be got to dissolve itself. The letter stated all the reasons for such an act. It would relieve the Government from embarrassment, and it would also supply it with additional argument in favour of the measure, and conciliate the feelings of the King towards the Bill of Emancipation, into which circumstances alone coerced him. The letter, or part of it, was read on that evening to Mr. Woulfe (afterwards Chief Baron), and to another member of the Bar, not inferior to Woulfe in acumen and vigour of intellect. Their opinions on the feasibility of getting the Association to dissolve itself were sounded by the Commissioner, and Woulfe at once said, ‘Why not take Sheil into your confidence about it? He is in the room now.’ The Commissioner doubted whether it

would be advisable even for Sheil's own sake that he should be consulted, at least just then, as Sheil was so prominent a member of the body. But Woulfe urged that by all means Sheil's opinion should be obtained. When Sheil heard the letter from Mr. Hyde Villiers read to him, with his characteristic quickness, he cried—'Most important, most important; but 'tis in vain to think of doing anything without *Dan's* consent.' At that time O'Connell was at Darrynane, having left his Dublin beagles to enjoy the sweeter music of his Kerry ones. Sheil instinctively saw that the prodigious personal influence and the ulterior ambition of O'Connell would offer powerful incentives to the Agitator's opposition to such a measure as the abolition of the Association; it would appear in his eyes like an act of self-extinction. But after listening to the views put forward by the Commissioner, and hearing Woulfe and the fourth member of the circle (since raised to the judicial seat), Sheil yielded, and confessed that the thing was worth trying, and cried out, in his shrill sharp tones, 'It can be done only in one way.' When he mentioned one way, the group stood *arrectis auribus*.—'Yes! there is one way: we must commence by my giving a dinner, and we can have it coolly talked over at my table. I will

invite the chiefs of our "fierce democratic," and assail them with argument and claret, and endeavour to secure their approval of my policy *in futuro* and my dinner *in præsenti*,—and you, Mr. Villiers, must consent to be of the party. It will be absolutely necessary to have your presence." Mr. Villiers bowed assent, and told Sheil he was at his disposal if his presence could in anywise assist in bringing about so desirable an object as the dissolution of an Association that caused so much alarm to England and so much embarrassment to Ministers. Sheil, full of glee at the pleasure of working up the plot, rubbed his hands, gave his sarcastic chuckle, and the circle dissolved, to meet at the popular orator's table, and try, if possible, to bring about the consummation hinted at by Mr. Hyde Villiers. On the appointed evening, the table of Sheil was surrounded by nearly a score of influential persons more or less connected with the Association. Mr. Villiers sat at the right hand of the host, and attentively listened to the variety of opinions broached in the course of the animated discussion that ensued when Sheil urged the necessity of dissolving the body. At that time there was a sort of delegation which sent representatives for particular districts to the Association; and amongst these delegates was Mr.

Reynolds, afterwards Member for Dublin. He was on that evening one of the guests at Sheil's table, and he was one of the steadiest and most vehement opponents to the policy of dissolution. The majority of the company, as Mr. Villiers was very glad to perceive, were decidedly in favour of dissolving ; Mr. Reynolds and other delegates dissented to the last. Even these, however, showed some tendency to give way.—“What am I to do with my constituents, Mr. Sheil?” said Mr. Reynolds, alluding to the people of the district which had returned him to the Association.—“Why,” cried Sheil, *more suo*, “you must take into account that the public has a very short memory.”—Then and there, on that evening, it was resolved that the Association should be dissolved, and that no time should be lost in doing so.

His first entry into political life was in a secret Cabinet at Dublin Castle, and impressions of the pleasure of being “behind the scenes” seems to have coloured and influenced the conduct of the noble Earl throughout his course.

The late Lord Cloncurry thus commemorates the first appearance of her Majesty's late Secretary for Foreign Affairs :—

“I was accordingly so far honoured by Lord Anglesey's

confidence, as to be permitted to form a sort of private Cabinet, to which he frequently referred for counsel and assistance. In this extra-official council, of which I confess I was not at first a very willing member, were included Mr. George Villiers (now Earl of Clarendon), the late Right Hon. Anthony Blake, and Mr. William Henry Curran.”*

That statement was never denied, either by the late Lord Anglesey (who was alive and well at the time, (1849) of publication), or by Lord Clarendon. Neither the Chief Secretary of Ireland, Mr. Stanley (now Earl of Derby), nor the Attorney-General of Ireland (now Lord Justice of Appeal Blackburne), knew anything at the time of this secret Cabinet; and it was not wonderful that Irish Ministerial affairs did not then move smoothly, while “secret” machinery was clogging the action of responsible Ministers.

Thus it will be seen, that when Mr. Villiers was sent as Ambassador to Madrid, he went to that country with a large stock of commercial knowledge already laid up, and with faculties exercised in political life. His services there obtained him the Cross of the Bath; and on his succession to his uncle’s title he became a member of the Whig Cabinet of Lord Melbourne in its declining

* *Cloncurry Memoirs.* First Edition, p. 332.

days. In 1847, on the death of Lord Besborough, his knowledge of Ireland (and I have indicated some of its early sources) obtained his appointment to the Viceroyalty :—and rarely before was Viceroyalty so marked by strange political vicissitudes and curious political incidents. Like everything appertaining to Ireland, his government has been made the subject of indiscriminate eulogy and indiscriminate invective. The most opposite charges have been brought against him from Irish partizans ; and Orangemen and Obscurantists have vied with each other in assailing him.

Under the Aberdeen Coalition habitual “drifting” marked our interference in the affairs of Europe. It might be difficult to determine exactly how much of that fluctuating conduct was to be attributed to the ostensible Foreign Minister, the Earl of Clarendon. It is only fair to presume that some of his colleagues in the Cabinet exercised a considerable influence in every step taken upon the Eastern question. The peculiar relations of Lords Aberdeen and Palmerston to each other, and of Lord John Russell to both, must have often seriously embarrassed a politician like Lord Clarendon, of an excessively nervous temperament, an undecided cast of thought, and delicately situated in his own personal connection with the

“Old Whigs,” by many of whom the noble lord was looked on as a merely professional statesman. At a time when boldness was emphatically required, it was to be regretted that a Minister with more ascendancy of will than could be expected from the dangerously ductile nature of Lord Clarendon did not preside over the Foreign Policy of England.

Seen in society or in the senate, Lord Clarendon cannot fail to arrest attention. That tall attenuated form with the stooped shoulders and mingled appearance of feebleness and grace, might of itself suggest an enquiry as to who was that elegant invalid, so frail in body and so fashionable in appearance. The haggard, worn face still retaining the handsome traces of the “Mr. George Villiers” of thirty years ago; the smile still sweet and winning; the voice in conversation so pleasingly modulated; the forehead high but narrow, suggesting acute intellect without massiveness—combine to interest, and even prepossess, an observer. The bright, vivid look, with its airy and animated glance, at once records the presence of mental life, even though the rapidly succeeding air of exhaustion reveals that we were not looking upon a man of dominating force, and that however interesting in appearance, or accomplished in qualities,

the slender personage before us was never meant by nature for one of the rulers of men. Experience has proved that, in spite of his courtly graces, his skill in modern tongues, and his undoubted knowledge of political economy, the Earl of Clarendon is not equal to originating a policy, or deciding great events.

In saying this we are far from undervaluing the personal pretensions of Lord Clarendon. He is beyond question a highly intellectual man, and as President of the Board of Trade would probably reach his appropriate office. Beginning life as a Commissioner of Customs at Dublin, and afterwards Ambassador at Madrid, he has seen the world under various aspects, and learned much of that social actuality on which the condition of countries so much depends. But it is the habit of such minds to distrust the existence of national passions. The mere economist believes that mankind can be mastered by budgets and tariffs. The pride of dynasties, the traditions of empire, and even the passions born of religious subtleties, are entirely beyond the appreciation of a nature like that of Lord Clarendon, which can most readily comprehend the tangible and obvious. It is, also, characteristic of such minds that when they are compelled to become diplomatic they

exaggerate the parts of astute intriguers. They would govern little Pedlington with the elaborate statecraft of a Richelieu.

Much of this weakness is visible in Lord Clarendon. Artful in petty matters, he is really without adroitness in great exigencies. Either on his legs in the House of Peers, or at his desk in his office, there are no traits in Lord Clarendon of a ruling intellect, no evidences of the qualities that stamp a Minister's character and conduct with the impress of the great. In debate, he tries to achieve his object by courtesy to his antagonist, and by the assumption of an air of fascinating frankness to hide his painful nervousness. Even on the gravest subject he stands up to address the Peers with a simpering smile, and, with a graceful appeal to Lord Derby, deprecates any decided hostility. He then tells us in many words what every one knew before, and so highly does he appreciate thoughts that are obvious, that he repeats them again and again with complacent smiles. His diction is meagre, his arrangement without the arts of rhetoric, and he cannot address the emotions. Pleasing in conversation, his voice has not the depth for a debater; but the graces of his manner to some extent counteract the hesitation of his delivery.

Lord Jeffrey in his letters alludes to "those bright Clarendons," and the word "bright" describes the nature of Lord Clarendon's mind. It is keen, animated, and full of intelligence. It does not soar or sparkle; it has little sympathy with the deeper or graver emotions; nor does it incline to originality of speculation. He is an accomplished mixture of a bureaucrat and a diplomatist; but he has no appreciation either of the passions of a party or of a nation; he implicitly believes in the arts of office, and hence he failed so lamentably in not coming up to the national requirements of England in the transactions with France at the commencement of 1858. The Liberal Party, while Lord Palmerston was in office, used to speak of him as the next Premier, but he never could discharge with effect the post of a First Minister. He is too officialised, and he wants some of the instincts of an English statesman.

But his rank in politics, and his very considerable successes have been gained by his own industry and by his own talents. He was not born amongst the Whigs, nor is he one of their connection, *titulo matrimonii*. His knowledge of commerce, and his complete acquaintance with the master-springs of British trade are invaluable

attainments to a Cabinet Minister. Not deeply connected in party politics, Lord Clarendon could render effectual services to his Sovereign, under different connections. At a great English crisis, he could not be relied on as *the* man, and he rather wants weight with the aristocracy; but in the second order of Cabinet Ministers, he would be found most useful; with his many private virtues, his sustained faculty for labour, and his great stock of useful knowledge, he worthily wears his distinguished title, and must be admitted to be an ornament to his order.

CHAPTER VII.

VISCOUNT PALMERSTON.

IT was the time of the Duke of Portland's Ministry. The country was in a critical state; parties were broken up; Parliament was uncertain whether it should give its confidence to Whigs or to Tories. Pitt and Fox were both dead, other statesmen had grown effete or were discredited, and a number of candidates for fame were entering the public service. Amongst them was a remarkably fine young man, with stalwart form and joyous presence, and a considerable flow of spirits. He was popular down at Cambridge, and had struggled for the representation of the University. The Government of the day were glad to enrol him amongst their retainers. He was the gay and affable young Viscount Palmerston, and he accepted a Lordship of the Admiralty under the Duke of Portland's Premiership.

It was the time of Mr. Perceval. Parties were taking up ground, and the ranks were closing up at either side, and the promising young men went off in various directions. The Cabinet was aiming at Court influence, and sought to put down the Pope and Buonaparte at the same time, and to keep them both out of England. The times were awful and revolutionary; England had a terrible crisis to go through; the gravest and wisest shook their heads, and there was much croaking. Vice was installed in high places; the Sovereign was afflicted with the direst of calamities, and his Royal Sons were such as they have been truly described in the Grenville Papers. They had nearly all vices except cowardice. They could not help being brave, for the House of Brunswick never had a craven. In those days, the dark and gloomy ones of Mr. Perceval, the gay and affable Viscount was Secretary at War.

It was the time of Lord Liverpool in the first period of his ministry from 1812 to 1815. The prospects were brightening; the Duke of Wellington had been gloriously victorious; Waterloo was fought and won; the Tory party was stronger than the Whigs, though Canning and his friends held a dubious tone. The gay, affable Viscount was still Secretary at War.

It was the time of Lord Liverpool, in the second period of his Cabinet from 1815 to 1822. Castlereagh still was Leader in the House of Commons, and Canning had joined the Government for some time along with Huskisson and others of his friends. But in the Queen's Trial there were unpleasant episodes, and Canning left the Ministry, and Peel preferred to serve his country out of office. There was grievous suffering from the change of prices, and the financial revolutions of the State. The domestic question had become serious; there was what was called a massacre at Peterloo, and there was a conspiracy to murder all the King's Ministers. The gay, affable Viscount was still Secretary at War.

It was the time of Lord Liverpool, in the third period of his Cabinet, from 1822 to 1826. New men and a new spirit had been introduced. Castlereagh was dead; Canning was Leader of the House of Commons; the Grenvilles had joined the Government. The gay, affable Viscount was still Secretary at War.

It was the time of Mr. Canning. A totally new tone was taken about Foreign Affairs. The great Portugal Speech was delivered, in which Great Britain was likened, in its position amongst nations, to the fabled keeper of the winds. Some . . .

of the Whigs had joined the Ministry. The gay, affable Viscount, who had, for the first time, been admitted into the Cabinet, was still Secretary at War.

It was the time of Lord Goderich. The Ministry, a feeble Coalition, staggered along in a course of pitiable ineptitude. The gay, affable Viscount was still Secretary at War.

It was the time of the Duke of Wellington. The Goderich Ministry had been dismissed as incompetent. Huskisson and his friends were in the Ministry, and the gay, affable Viscount was still Secretary at War.

But there was a schism about taking Reform in minute doses. A small thing—East Retford—was the cause of a mighty split; away went a number of uncertain gentlemen who called themselves “Canningites,” and, wonderful to relate, the gay, affable Viscount was no longer Secretary at War.

It was the time of Earl Grey. From all points of the political horizon, parties had come together in Downing Street. For little better than a year and a half, the air of the Opposition Benches had been breathed by the gay Viscount, and he did not like it, so he did his best to make himself comfortable, and to reverse that process for all the

nations of Christendom, by consenting to play at
Æolus in Downing Street.

It was the time of Trades Unions, and strikes, and processions, and of Birmingham threatening to pour its masses upon London. Bristol was in flames, Lord John Russell called the resistance of the House "the whisper of a faction," fierce speeches were made, and hard things were said upon the memories of the Percevals, Sidmouths, and Castlereaghs, under whom the gay, affable Viscount learned the arts of a statesman; but Æolus was in Downing Street, and blew hard upon Foreign Affairs, and the atmosphere was dark with protocols, and exquisite was the smile upon the face of Prince Talleyrand.

And those were times when Tories of all kinds and of all schools quaked, and Englishmen in London and out of London felt strangely on hearing that Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, had to fortify his house, and Æolus was still in Downing Street.

It was the time of the Lichfield House compact. Some of the Ministers could not brook the great Irish Tribune; Richmond, and Ripon, and Stanley, and others seceded, but as agitation was to be employed confidentially by Government, why should not Æolus stay in Downing Street, es-

pecially if the Irish Church was to be blown down ?

It was the time of Lord Melbourne's first Ministry ; there had been some dark doings. Earl Grey was gone ; but Æolus was still in Downing Street, and was prepared to blow harder than ever.

But Peel and the Duke of Wellington came in, and Æolus had to retire, and many wished to hear no more about him, and hoped that at last he had puffed himself out for ever.

But Æolus had not the least idea of keeping out, and again in 1835, he was installed in office, and a contentious, perplexing, teasing, harrassing policy, which was humorously called "Canningism" was again ventilated by Æolus down to 1841.

Then he was out of Downing Street for five years, and the Foreign Affairs of England were greatly benefited thereby. Queen Victoria, with Wellington, Peel, and Aberdeen advising her, had friends all over the world. The funds were sent up to par, and it had been in sending them down that Æolus had always excelled.

But the country was not done with him. From 1847 to 1851, he was at his old breezy work, fanning the subterranean fires of revolution in

foreign states, and his best friends, and his most intimate colleagues could stand him no longer. The Ruler of the Winds began to scent of deputations from mean smoking rooms full of injudicious bottle-holders. Lord John Russell was breaking down as an administrator; there was no Channel Fleet to lose, so he resolved to expel Æolus from Downing Street.

An American genius once aspired to snaffle a tornado, and tie knots on a thunderbolt; but in trying to smother Æolus, Lord John Russell resembled the Kentuckian in an aspiration after the impossible. The stormy Viscount had to leave Downing Street; but in a few weeks afterwards, he gave one vigorous puff, and the Cabinet fell like a house of cards.

The world then speculated as to what the Viscount would do. Some said that he would join the Tories. All were astonished when he consented to take the Home Department under the Aberdeen coalition. It was a strange sight to witness the war-spirit of the world engaged not in "sketching out a few changes in the map of Europe," but in attacking smoky chimnies. The Russian contest came on. The disasters attendant on the first opening of English war took place; the Duke of Newcastle was left to take charge of

the war; his colleagues were out of town; the army of martyrs rotted; Lord John Russell fled from the Cabinet when Mr. Roebuck pointed his menacing finger, and the Peelites soon after decamped, and then came a chance of the Premiership. Most dexterously, most sharply, did the noble Viscount play his game, he became at the same time the Chief of the Liberal Party, and the Prime Minister of England, and performed such public services as to gain from Mr. Disraeli the tribute that "he deserved well of his country." His immense experience and buoyant confidence were invaluable, and the sight of one who had passed seventy winters undergoing the toils of a Prime Minister along with the labour of the Leadership of the House of Commons, and performing his duties with unfaltering energy, delighted his friends, dazzled his adversaries, and daunted the enemies of England.

Of a statesman so variously brilliant, with such shining merits, but such serious defects, it is difficult to speak. Even his friends, and they are a myriad, admit his grave errors, while his adversaries cordially admire his rare gifts and unrivalled activity of mind.

Lord Palmerston is the representative of a branch of the Temples of Stowe which settled

in Ireland. In his direct line of the Temples, Lord Palmerston counts amongst his ancestry the first Sir William Temple (the friend and secretary of Sir Philip Sidney)—afterwards, through the influence of Archbishop Usher, Provost of the University of Dublin. His son, Sir John Temple, became member for that University in Parliament, was a leading public character, and the historian of the Civil Wars of his own time in Ireland. He married the sister of the eminent divine, Dr. Hammond, and had two sons—Sir William Temple (of “Triple Alliance” fame), and John, father to the first Lord Palmerston. Lord Macaulay has in the most charming manner given the history of the eldest of these sons. The younger, John, became Solicitor, and afterwards Attorney-General, in Ireland. After suffering from the vicissitudes of the Revolution, he was restored to his estates, and died at East Sheen, in Surrey, in 1704. His son, Henry, was great-grandfather of the present Viscount Palmerston: who is only the third peer of his family, though the date of the patent was in 1722.

He was educated at Harrow, and at the University of Cambridge; and he is, also, one of those brilliant and gifted pupils who have done honour to the teaching of Dugald Stewart. For nearly

two years Lord Palmerston resided with Stewart, who, in the words of another of his pupils (Lord John Russell)—

Gave rules to Fancy, grace to Thought,
Taught Virtue's laws, and practised what he taught.

Two facts arrest attention in examining the life of Lord Palmerston. The first is, that he has served under not less than *ten* Prime Ministers! He held office successively under the Duke of Portland (as Lord of the Admiralty), Mr. Perceval, the Earl of Liverpool, Mr. Canning, Lord Goderich, the Duke of Wellington, Earl Grey, Lord Melbourne's first and second Ministries, Lord John Russell, and the Earl of Aberdeen. He was for *nineteen* years (1809 to 1828) Secretary at War, and for *fifteen* years (1830 to 1834—1835 to 1841—1846 to 1851) Secretary for Foreign Affairs. I do not recollect a case of such long official tenure; but there is another circumstance more remarkable than the duration of the brilliant Viscount's official life. It is, that with all his eminent abilities, in political action he should have been so comparatively quiescent for nearly the first twenty years of his Parliamentary career. There never was any statesman so eminent in the Senate, the first part of whose

career corresponds so little with the last. It has been written of him,—“In the early part of his life, he sacrificed too much to social enjoyment, being proficient in those graceful pursuits which impart more polish to the character than power to the will. But his nature was too masculine to sink beneath the flowery bondage of fashionable life, and applying to affairs he took them for his pastime.” He seems to have had one of those natures which require to be moved by some accident into the full consciousness of what they can perform. As the review of the ‘Hours of Idleness’ stung Lord Byron into poetical activity, so the cavalier manner in which the Duke of Wellington treated “the Canningites” probably aroused the self-asserting qualities of Lord Palmerston.

In his system of managing the House of Commons, Sir Robert Peel was called “a great Parliamentary middle-man.” Irish society, also, supplies the illustration most apt for Lord Palmerston’s Foreign Policy. He was the “*Captain Rock* of Europe.” The desultory fierceness and wordy arrogance of Lord Palmerston’s diplomacy imitated on a vast scale the minacious lawlessness of agrarian outrage in Ireland.

His rage for meddling with the affairs of

small communities was of the most singular kind. A petty territory—whose name is probably omitted by some of the gazetteers, and whose frontiers have the same proportions to European demarcations as the borders of a Kidderminster carpet to the boundaries of England—could not go right unless its internal affairs were supervised and regulated from our too famous “F.O.” in Downing Street. We had to conquer Brobdignag, and we had also to dwarf our minds to the backstair-intrigues of each atom of the Lilliputian Confederation. Our diplomacy under Lord Palmerston’s auspices was becoming purely ludicrous. Its machinery was applied to the arrangement of trifles beneath contempt. Village scandals were exaggerated into diplomatic questions of momentous importance. Somebody, in some place, pulled another body’s nose, and their respective nations had recourse to protocols. The most contemptible squabbles were brought before the Cabinet of the British Empire. Under no other Prime Minister was there so much personal acrimony, such envenomed littleness, such constant spleen about trifles as under Lord Palmerston.

There was scarcely a country in the world where we were not involved in a diplomatic entanglement about some ridiculous trifle, entirely

beneath the statesmanship of a great empire. In Greece a Minister insisted upon introducing to the Court a lady of doubtful reputation. The Queen resisted; then came a Ministerial crisis, and all our diplomacy was set at work. Could anything be more ridiculous than our interference in such petty Court scandals at the other end of Europe? If Mayfair was gossiping for a week about the tattle of the Orkneys or the Hebrides, or if the Secretary for the Home Department were called on to act in a case of female small-talk about what Mrs. Honour said about Mrs. Abigail, we should all laugh.

At Tuscany, a squabble about an *attaché* of the Sardinian Legation was magnified into a mighty affair, as if it were as serious as some of the causes of quarrel between Charles V. and Francis I. And then, crossing the Atlantic, our Foreign Office busybodies were all in a hurry on account of some despicable filibustering expedition. The steam had to be got up to an Armada-panic temperature. Immense events are looming in the distance, when, lo! two or three suspicious-looking craft are seen hull-down in the horizon; our West Indian fleet gives chase, "England expects that every——" little middy should have a laugh at the big-wigs and the

farce ends—not in another Trafalgar, but after the plan of battle in the *Critic* :—"The *Yankee* fleet I cannot see, because 'tis not in sight!"

Lord Palmerston in his mode of treating Foreign Affairs, had a strange talent for nursing a whitlow into a wen. His political habit was so inflammatory, so constitutionally excitable, that the prick of a pin was a grave wound in his case. To exaggerate trifling grounds of irritation into serious causes of anger, was a fatal and foolish policy. "This country cannot afford little wars," said Wellington; nor can it. The consequences of this mania for meddling are ruinous and also ridiculous. A "busybody" is always mischievous to himself, while the cause of mirth to his neighbours. Dramatists and novelists in all ages have delighted in painting the character of one who minds everybody's business but his own. The character has a popular relish because it is so readily recognised. John Bull was playing it before the world under Lord Palmerston's management. Foreigners took his "F.O." in Downing Street as a contraction for *Figaro*, the cypher letters which supplied the key to his foreign policy. His system was discredited from the most opposite quarters. The Duke of Wellington opposed it; so did Sir Robert Peel, and the

Earl of Aberdeen, and Earl Grey, and Sir William Molesworth, and Mr. Cobden, and last, not least, for twenty years the "Times" denounced it with great ability and energy.

The policy had finally to be abandoned as deliberately condemned. Christendom found Lord Palmerston what England found James the Second "intolerant and intolerable." Sir Robert Peel in the last speech spoken by him said:—

"Diplomacy is a remarkable instrument used by civilised nations for the purpose of preventing war. Unless it be used to appease the angry passions of individual men, to check the feelings that rise out of national resentments—unless it be used for that purpose, it is an instrument not only costly but mischievous. If then your application of diplomacy be to fester every wound, to provoke instead of soothing resentments, to place a minister in every Court of Europe for the purpose, not of preventing quarrels, nor of adjusting quarrels, but for the purpose of continuing an angry correspondence, and for the purpose of promoting what is supposed to be an English interest, of keeping up conflicts with the representatives of other powers, then I say, not only is the expenditure upon this costly instrument thrown away, but this great engine, used by civilised society for the purpose of maintaining peace, is perverted into a cause of hostility and war.

And the Empire has universally acquiesced in

the justice of that censure upon the Captain Rock of Europe.

No change in a melodrama could be more startlingly sudden than that by which Lord Palmerston was converted into being the chief of the Liberal Party, and the leader of the House of Commons. On the domestic question he had been always neutral; his relationship to his colleagues in the Melbourne Whigs, and the Bedford Whigs was just as if he and they had shaken hands upon an agreement. "So you allow me to dictate to Christendom as I like, you may pull and drag Old England to pieces if you please. I will not meddle with you, and leave me alone." In point of fact several of his Whig colleagues were not competent to check him.

The opportunity of settling the Corn Law Question, and of doing so with perfect consistency, was left to Lord John Russell and the Liberals in 1845, when Sir R. Peel resigned. Some independent Whigs strongly objected to Lord Palmerston being placed again at the Foreign Office, and the Queen was again obliged to send for Sir Robert Peel. Afterwards the Bedford Whigs endorsed the blustering policy, and a little afterwards they had to abandon it.

But when Lord Aberdeen fell, the position of

Lord Palmerston was powerful. He stood well with the Tories. Society had always said "There's a great deal of Toryism in Lord Palmerston;" he had some ephemeral and flying popularity with the plebeian politicians who are inspired by the Licensed Victuallers, and in London he was vastly popular. He knew every body worth knowing, and he was ready to receive anybody who had anything to tell that was worth hearing. His mansion was the resort of a strange congress. The Clubs often stared at the names of his guests, and even the House of Commons wondered how his bitterest and most envenomed assailants on the Monday enjoyed his hospitality on the next Saturday. Cambridge House and its witcheries produced great effect. Lord Palmerston had so many personal and social resources, that he felt quite confident when the patronage of the Treasury was placed at his disposal, that he could get any amount of "popularity" that he would require.

So he could, and so he did. It rained panegyrics for a twelvemonth. He was described insidiously as a second Chatham. The ears of the town were stunned with the clatter of his admirers. Their reasoning was the logic of defiance; their rhetoric was the tautology of boast. Amidst their

vaunting verbiage was a vehement chuckle, which occasionally rose into a stormy self-approbation, that showed Master Æolus still was puffing away.

“illa se jactet in aula

“ Æolus, et clauso ventorum carcere regnet,”

But though he could obtain the noisy and factitious conterfeit for a real popularity, my Lord Proteus could not secure the confidence of a Party. For his triumph was only for the hour. As a Party Chief, and as a Leader of the House of Commons, Lord Palmerston decidedly failed, and failed ludicrously.

“A careless, coarse, and over-familiar style of discourse, without sufficient regard to persons or occasions, *and an almost total want of political decorum*, were the errors by which he was most hurt in the public opinion, and those through which his enemies obtained the greatest advantage over him.” Those significant words are to be found in Burke’s famous “Appeal from the New to the Old Whigs,” and they were applied to Sir Robert Walpole, who gained power, neither by accident, nor intrigue, nor tergiversation.

And although Viscount Palmerston held office under ten Prime Ministers, from the Duke of

Portland to the Earl of Aberdeen, it appeared that experience failed him in his post. His tone and conduct in the Leadership of the Commons were utterly unworthy of the place and the audience, and were most unsuitable to one with the ambiguous antecedents of the noble Lord. Never did any of his Lordship's predecessors so entangle themselves with adversaries, and descend to "ribald ridicule." His tone was not only unbecoming in a man of his rank and station, but it was maladroit in an assembly where the noble Lord had some superiors, and several equals, on the score either of birth, or of fortune, or eloquence, or lofty intellect. It was the first time that Parliament had seen the spectacle of a blustering Leader of the House of Commons. Lord North was often familiar, but never vulgar; if he was too often witty on grave questions, Lord North was neither offensive nor coarse. His "delightful temper" has been commemorated by the most brilliant of his adversaries. It may be doubted whether, in the orations of Burke, Fox, and Barré against Lord North, there was so galling a passage as that withering invective hurled by Mr. Bright against the official personage "who sat on those Treasury Benches in years before he, Mr. Bright, was born." Lord

Palmerston, we surmise, does not yet forget the vivid contrast drawn by Mr. Bright between the Leadership of Sir Robert Peel, Lord J. Russell, and Mr. Disraeli, "who left no stain on that "distinguished post," and the style assumed by Lord Palmerston himself. If the Premier forgets Mr. Bright, others do not. The House cheered that speech vehemently.

But it was droll to witness the jovial tone in which the Prime Minister laughed at the public and both Houses of Parliament, and even himself ! He took them all in as regularly as the newspapers ; he played upon them all round with unparalleled hilarity—winked to confederates in his secrets (if not in his Cabinet)—gave the artful leer of invitation to some of his confiding dupes—and then, after chuckling over some decoyed Benthamite, he put on a sentimental face while he heaved a sigh over some ruined Whig reputation ! The rollicking air with which he performed his cajolery was quite wonderful in its way, and he never seemed more astonishing than when, with a grimace on his face, he encountered a British public in its gloomiest mood. For the growls of John Bull, the comic Premier had his wallet of small pleasantries of an excruciating kind. But his prodigious performances in luring the Radicals

into supposing him to be playing their game, while he was really aiding to put us back to the Tory times, was far more ludicrous than his best joke.

It was this singular position of Lord Palmerston that explained the qualified support given to him by some of the Conservatives. They found it hard to take part against a gay old Tory of the oldest school, disguising himself as a "Liberal," and hoaxing the Reform Club.

As a matter of sentiment, many Conservatives refused to deal roughly with one whom they regarded as a sort of Parliamentary grandpapa. They forgave the irregularity of his political conduct. They did not fire upon a craft which belonged to their own squadron, though for the time it hoisted false colours. Severer courses would have been warranted towards him, but it would have been waste of what Canning called "that valuable commodity, indignation," to lavish any of it upon a Cabinet Minister in a cap and bells. A solemn lecture, richly deserved, would have convulsed the jolly Premier.

He was taken at his word, and looked on as a great Parliamentary *quiz*—making game of everything. His elevation was traceable to the rout of the Peelites, the fall of Lord John Russell, and

the dearth of talent amongst the Independent Liberals. With great connections, and experience without parallel, it took our "Brummagem Alcibiades" fifty years to climb into the Premiership, though Mr. Perceval, Lord Liverpool, and several more statesmen under whom he served, gained that distinction with few of his personal advantages.

Yet it cannot be denied that the *vis comica* of his political career was well kept up. His capacity for pastime was incessant. If thorough-going jollity could pilot the State vessel, the helm should never have been taken from the rollicking Premier. The jesting way in which he encountered a difficulty, and succumbed under it without a pang of self-reproach, was a rare sight. The joyousness with which he offered his hand to friends and foes, treating them all alike with the same impartial jocularitv, and the sportive ease with which he played with principles, was amusing as a piece of character.

But Lord Palmerston at that time wearied the House of Commons. He lost its respect, and it rose against him. His elevation to the pinnacle of power made him grow giddy, and he affected to be a Dictator. His wit was not brilliant enough, or his eloquence so dazzling as to hide the egregious errors of his deportment when he

assumed the low part of an angry wag. He had never been a party man ; he had coquetted with all connections ; and it seemed rather absurd to take up the obsolete name of a Canningite after the Reform Bill had been carried. It was curious that he exhibited some of the worst faults of Mr. Canning.

In commenting on the defects of Mr. Canning's character, Lord Brougham observes, " His irritable temper has been noted ; *he had a love of trifling, and a fondness for indulging in pleasantry,* " more injurious to his estimation with ordinary men than his temper." Imitators always exaggerate the faults of their models, and Lord Palmerston burlesqued Mr. Canning. " These qualities greatly marred," continues Lord Brougham, " the effect of Mr. Canning's more . . . solid and important talents." One might think that Lord Brougham had written this description with an oblique reference to " the pupil" of Mr. Canning.

" Bred up in office from his early years, Mr. Canning had become so much accustomed to its pleasures that he felt uneasy when they were taken away from him." And further on we are told, " The unfortunate love of power carried too far, and felt so as to make the gratification of it

“essential to existence, *is ruinous to the character of a statesman*. It leads often to *abandonment of principle*, constantly to compromise; it subjects him to frequent dependence; it lowers the tone of his mind.”

The question has been often asked, but never decidedly answered, “whether Lord Palmerston is an Irishman?” When Mr. Fitzstephen French complained that there was no Irishman in Lord Aberdeen’s Cabinet, Sir James Graham cried, “Lord Palmerston.”* In his traits of character there are

* “The late Lord Palmerston married twice, his second wife being daughter of Mr. Benjamin Mee. Riding at the West End of London, his horse ran away, and Lord Palmerston was thrown and nearly killed. He was taken into the house of Mrs. Mee, and the surgeons forbad his removal, and he had to remain there for several days. He was treated with the greatest kindness and attention by the family, and when the time came for his being removed to his own residence he elected to stay where he was, and he married Miss Mee. Such was the story told at the time, and I remember its circulation in society when the present Lord Palmerston began to distinguish himself in politics.”

I print this note on the authority of a venerable beneficed clergyman of the Church of England. Few now living recollect Lord Palmerston when he was at Cambridge. The father of one of the most efficient Conservative writers of the day describes him as “never

certainly many qualities which are commonly associated with Irish blood. His bantering on the gravest questions, his joviality, his courage with too much of bluster, his defiant air, the strong personal spirit which enters into his politics, the rapid transitions between his moods of storm and sunshine, his enjoyment of "rows," his lavish kindness to his political dependants, his peculiar mode of using public patronage, his liking for a political "tail," his incessant hospitality, his recklessness about petty conventions, his biting mockery of all formalists, his rollicking tone even when the game has gone against him, his matchless stock of assurance polished into brazen-brilliancy, and the ease with which he makes himself at home with all sorts of characters, reveal the nature of the best type of an Irishman. In many points his personal deportment is strongly suggestive of an Irishman. The personification of pleasantry and pugnacity is thoroughly seen in Lord Palmerston.

showing at Cambridge any of that rollicking tone which one might suppose. He used to come regularly to lectures, bring his note-book with him, and without being a drudge, he got through his work very well. He was no idler, and he profited by his studies, although not aiming at academical honours. He looked to be what he was, a fine, manly, spirited young man."

The way, also, in which through his Parliamentary career, he has been accustomed to call a Member of Parliament, not of his connection and with whom he has little intimacy, " my honourable friend " is very Irish.

In addressing the Speaker, Lord Palmerston repeatedly uses " Sir " just like an Irishman,* and many of the caricatures in *Punch*, representing the witty Viscount, are like photographs of an Irishman. He has certainly all the virtues which are to be looked for in a fine specimen of Irish race, and his thunderbolts really do seem as if they had been manufactured in Tipperary.

Though he did not succeed as Chief of a Party, or as Leader of the House of Commons, Viscount Palmerston was nearly the greatest personal success

* " When first I addressed the House of Commons," once remarked the late Chief Justice Doherty, " I was really in a great fit of nervousness, and I would have given much to be back at the Four Courts. It was a trying thing to wish to speak well in presence of Canning, and Brougham, and Peel, and Plunket, and Tierney. When I sat down, Canning turned round and said to me, ' Well done, Doherty, very good indeed. You only made one mistake ; like every Irishman you ' Sir'd ' the Speaker too much. You should ' Sir ' only at the beginning and end.' ' Well,' I answered, ' I really don't care how I call'd him, since I did not say ' Ma'am ' to him.' "

in the politics of his age. In Tory times, the gay affable Viscount was always in office; in Whig times he was never out of power. He was for twenty years Member for the University of Cambridge. His Ministerial enjoyment can be counted by decades of years, and his opposition lasted only for months, with the exception of the Peel period from 1841 to 1846. As a young man, he had great successes in fashionable life, and he was one of the best and manliest of Brummell's school, but never degenerated into Pelhamism. It was a singular destiny that he who survived all the Temples of the Broadlands branch, should have married the last of the Lambes, that he should have been the brother-in-law of a Prime Minister, and finally a Premier himself. For a season, during his culmination, Cambridge House in the eyes of Europe was "No. 1, London," and its occupant might be fancied as looking down from the "Piccadilly Highlands" upon the Stafford House Whigs, the Houses of Parliament, and even upon a grander and more august abode. It was a dictatorship, fast but fleeting. The *entourage* of his domestic circle was unrivalled. With Almacks, with Exeter Hall, with the Irish Orangemen, with the Reform Club, with invisible factors of public opinion, he had special relations.

He had fortune, and fashion, and fame ; he stooped to conquer, and it was wonderful that he was not stifled under the cloud of incense which rose up before and around him. Walpole and Pitt were not intoxicated by the giddy height where they stood so long, and Lord Palmerston from the sudden elevation might be pardoned for losing his steadiness. The Duke of Portland died at seventy years of age, and it was with him that Lord Palmerston commenced his career, and since the Revolution Lord Palmerston was our oldest Prime Minister. In 1856 the Viscount had completed his seventy-second year.

The sight of so much vigour with so much age, of seventy winters carried with buoyant and elastic ease, after a life of hard toil and excitement, was dazzling to behold. His mind was fresh and vivid ; his tongue keen, trenchant and vivacious ; his temper did not corrode, though he became dictatorially contumelious ; neither was he retrospective, or senile in his conversation like some of his colleagues and companions. In the morning, with a playful and extremely arch speech the gay Viscount would make a bevy of bridesmaids titter ; in the afternoon he would quietly arrange his thunderbolts for the battering of some second-rate Powers ; and in the evening he was ready

to hector a House of Commons, and with a bold face to brow-beat a bench of provincial tribunes. He forgot himself at last. His pretensions were great, but those of the Commons were greater still—he spoke and lorded it in his own name; but the Commons rose in the name of England, they had amongst them patrician families, whose blood-springs had been running for centuries before the Temples were chronicled in story, and the gentlemen of England with pedigrees older than their oldest oaks, would not tolerate being treated as if they were so many shopkeepers or Marylebone Vestrymen. The House of Commons spurned him, and it was right that the lesson should be given him, but it was a terrible lesson, and a tremendous fall. Another man would have been mortified at such humiliation, but Lord Palmerston *did not feel* it, and it is the worst thing that can be said of him. His fatal fault was in not being able to distinguish between true and false public opinion.

It is sincerely to be lamented that at the beginning of 1858 he lost such an opportunity of consolidating and purifying his reputation. He broke down when he had to mediate between the people of England and the passing wrath of the Emperor of the French. Where then

were his defiance and his menacing self-confidence? Where then was the nerve of the modern Chatham? He clouded the character of his diplomatic system, and authenticated the censure of those who had condemned his policy as consisting only of the common-place arts of wordy insolence and dexterous subservience. When pitted against a formidable antagonist, he failed; and it was lamentable that it should have been before a Bonaparte, that the tone of England should have faltered, and the reputation of Lord Palmerston crumbled. It was under its noisiest vindicator that the honour of Britain was (for a time) gravely compromised. But the subject is too painful to dwell upon.

In an age when commercial frauds have tarnished the characters of those middle classes, who proclaim themselves as monopolising the manhood and virtue of England, it is worth recollecting that one descendant of the Temples of Stowe gave a splendid example of acting in the spirit of honour, even at the sacrifice of his personal fortunes. Would declaiming traders have disentailed the Grenville estates with the same disregard of self shown by the much respected Marquis of Chandos? And in an age when the aristocracy is so much abused by idle

railers—what noisy democrat, or frothy declaimer against the House of Peers could display the extraordinary vigour and buoyancy of Viscount Palmerston ?

The aristocracy, though opposed to him, always felt instinctively that he was a credit to their order, and his fellow subjects of every rank and class believed that Lord Palmerston's courage, his brilliancy, his unfailing stock of health and energy, and his possession of all the qualities called manly, were truly creditable to the land that gave him birth. Opposed in his Foreign Policy ; rebelled against as a Parliamentary leader ; as a *man*, English society could never refuse its cordial admiration to the energy and extraordinary gifts which, for twenty years and more, made Viscount Palmerston one of the uncrowned chiefs, not of the Commons merely, but of Christendom itself. His political policy will not be followed ; his Leadership will not give precedents for imitation ; but the brightness of his personal fame will long endure, and his contemporaries of every class and party recollecting his manhood and gallant qualities of nature, may truly echo the words of Sir Robert Peel, and say " We were all proud of him."

CHAPTER VIII.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL.

LORD JOHN RUSSELL, to speak of him with the freedom of History, presented so many contrasts in his character that he is worthy of special study. He had that native force of resolution—that intrepidity of spirit which in a life of action is worth more than mere talents or hoarded attainments. His outward form was frail and weakly; his countenance sicklied over with the effects of ill health and solitary self-communing; his figure shrunken below the dimensions of ordinary manhood; his general air that of a meditative invalid. But within that feeble body was a spirit that knew not how to cower, a brave heart that could pulsate vehemently with large and heroical emotions, a soul that aspired to live nobly in a proud and right manly career. His voice was weak, his

accent mincing with affectation, his elocution broken, stammering, and uncertain, save when in a few lucky moments his tongue seemed unloosed, and there came rushing from his lips a burst of epigrammatic sentences—logical, eloquent, and terse—and occasionally vivified by the fire of genius. Then would his right hand convulsively be clenched, his head proudly thrown back, the outline of his face become rigid and drawn, and the small form seem to dilate, while the cheek would blanchen with moral excitement, as the ecstasy of applauding partizans made the walls of the Senate ring with echoing cheers. But these visitations of the Muse came with the irregularity, and uncertainty of inspiration. Always an adroit and apt debater, with a tenacious memory and tact in applying his previous knowledge to a disputed question, he was so deficient in those physical gifts and personal endowments which charm large assemblies, that he failed in gaining that fascination over others which is the result of first-rate oratorical power. Yet his defects as a speaker were amply compensated for by his merits as a man. Nature gave him his bold and fearless spirit,—and he gave himself a moral purpose. He had the advantage of being trained to think in the Edinburgh School of Philosophy, and had

learned from Dugald Stewart to scale the height of speculation, and contemplate with philosophic spirit the sublime and spiritual problem of human destiny. He was not bred up in the routine training of a Duke's son, but had been cast into contact with a variety of classes in early life. Bringing into English politics more of that methodizing and theoretical philosophy than has generally been fashionable in our legislators, he never wholly lost the challenging and disputatious investigation of principles which results from the study of speculative science. He would, probably, have never been a man of action if he had not been driven onward by an ambitiously patriotic purpose to link his name in his country's memory with acts of historical renown. A thorough Englishman, he worshipped the constitution of his country in the orthodox Whig creed, by which the great Revolution Families seek to rule the party attached to progress. By family pride and ancestral recollections, being attached to popular ideas, he thirsted for the delicious draught of popularity won by great deserts. Political life, therefore, presented to him a scene of sentimental enjoyment and pleasurable sensation.

The most remarkable fact in the history of Lord John Russell is the wonderfully recuperative

power so constantly seen in his chequered career. For several years he was derided as a failure ; yet Mr. Canning said of his Reform Speech in 1826, "that he had never heard the question of moderate Reform so ably treated." For a long time, Sir R. Peel affected to make light of the noble Lord's talents, but Sir Robert lived to wince under the galling taunts and the moral superciliousness uttered in barbed sentences by the epigrammatic lips of the Whig Leader. In 1834-5 the Reform Party had quarrelled with Lord Brougham ; Earl Grey had retired ; Sir F. Burdett had left its ranks ; Lord Derby and Sir James Graham, in defence of the Protestant Establishment, had joined the Conservatives ; many lights of Liberalism were extinct ; but said the Duke of Wellington to Mr. Rogers, "Lord John is a host in himself." It was thought that his career was at an end in 1841, when "he was caught bathing" by Sir Robert Peel ; but he subsequently held the Premiership longer than the antagonist who had overthrown him with ninety-one majority. Such a career of striking political vicissitudes, of crushing defeats and of avenging triumphs, is not paralleled in party annals.

At an early period of his life, Lord John Russell had fixed attention on himself by his

intellectual industry, and by the persistency with which he had aspired to win a laurelled name. As a novelist he had sighed over the fortunes of "The Nun of Aronca;" as a biographer he had told the story of Lord William Russell; as an editor he had published the letters of Lady Rachel Russell; as a historian he had written "Memoirs of the Affairs of Europe;" as an essayist he had produced an able (but incomplete) dissertation on "The Causes of the French Revolution;" as a dramatist, he had composed "Don Carlos." He had also written sundry pieces of verse, and he had given repeated proofs of being what Moore called "a high-thoughted spirit." Here is a passage from "Don Carlos," which reads with interest as we think of its writer's vast success in the political drama wherein he has played so leading a part.

Valdez. It was my aim,
And I obtained it not for empty glory,
For as I rooted out the weeds of passion,
One still remained, and grew till its tall plant
Struck root in every fibre of my heart—
It was ambition—not the mean desire
Of rank or title, but great glorious sway
O'er multitudes of minds.

Lucero. That you have gained.

Valdez. I have indeed, and why? I'll tell thee why.

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My appetites

Were in one potent essence concentrate,
I neither lov'd, nor feasted, nor play'd dice ;
Power was my feast, my mistress, and my game.
Thus I have acted with a will entire,
And wreathed the passions that distracted others
Into a sceptre for myself.

By birth belonging to the hereditary Whigs,—
Lord John Russell by his pursuits and associations
became identified with the literary Liberals.
Applauded by Mackintosh, favourably reviewed
by Jeffrey,—he was hailed as a rising planet by
the Holland House coterie.

Lord John Russell through life has aimed at
double honours. He has endeavoured to gain the
celebrity due to successes in the study, and in the
Senate. His pen has aided his tongue in keeping
his name prominently before the public ; the
mental vigour, the grace of language, and the store
of illustration which mark his best speeches, could
only have come from continued literary culture.

The “Aladdin Lamp speech” has been often
alluded to on account of the force of its thoughts
and the singular beauty of its language. In de-
bating the Reform Bill in 1831, Sir Robert Peel
read at length what he called one of the most just
and beautiful panegyrics on the British Constitu-
tion ever delivered. It was from a speech deli-

vered in 1819 by Lord John Russell, in which he said :—‘ Old Sarum existed when Somers and the great men of the Revolution established our government. Rutland sent as many members as Yorkshire, when Hampden lost his life in defence of the Constitution. If we should change the principles of our Constitution, we should commit the folly of the servant in the story of Aladdin, who was deceived by the cries of new lamps for old.’ The language in which Lord John Russell had clothed his ideas in this famous Aladdin speech was as graceful as ever came from the best orators or writers of his party. Often as it has been quoted in public assemblies, it was never read with more elocutionary or graceful emphasis than by Sir Robert Peel, whose silvery tones and modulated voice did full justice to the following words, pregnant with political truth.

“ Our lamp is covered with dust and rubbish, but it has a magical power. It has raised up a smiling land, not bestrode with overgrown palaces, but covered with modest dwellings, every one of which contains a freeman, enjoying equal protection with the proudest subject in the land. It has called into life all the busy creations of commercial prosperity. Nor when men were wanted to defend and illustrate their country, have such men been deficient. When the fate of the nation depended on the line of policy which she should adopt, there were orators of the highest

degree placing in the strongest light the arguments for peace and war. When we decided upon war, we had heroes to gain us laurels in the field and wield our thunders on the sea. When, again, we returned to peace, the questions of internal policy, of education of the poor, of criminal law, found men ready to devote the most splendid abilities to the well-being of the community. And shall we change an instrument that has produced effects so wonderful for a burnished and tinsel toy of modern manufacture? No; small as the remaining treasure of the constitution is, I cannot consent to throw it into the wheel for the chance of obtaining a prize in the lottery of revolution."

The point and polish of the foregoing passage are not less observable than its broad political truth. It records in striking terms that attachment to the Constitution as a *whole* which has been always a popular feeling in England. Lord Macaulay has, perhaps, too often used "the lamp of Aladdin" as an illustration in his brilliant 'Essays,'—but Lord John spoke the passage in 1819, before Lord Macaulay loomed over the literary horizon. The lottery-wheel metaphor had great felicity:—the "actuality"* from which the trope was taken has since happily become historical.

* "Actuality" is a term much used by some political writers, to distinguish the reality of passing transactions from the realities that are gone by, or which may be anticipated.

The essay entitled "the Causes of the French Revolution" was published anonymously in 1832, and in an octavo volume. It is only a portion of a work designed on an extensive scale. No one can read it without perceiving that the author was a man of reflecting mind and highly exercised understanding. He treats the "French Revolution" as the necessary sequence of protracted despotism and an utterly irrational system of government. I will cite from it a passage that contains the very essence of philosophical Whiggism, and epitomizes the general view of the Conservative-Liberals for the last twenty years.

"Despotism and democracy, indeed, bear a striking resemblance in many of their features, which was long ago pointed out by Aristotle. Each is suspicious, jealous, fearful, fond of flattery, cruel, capricious, and tyrannical. Aristocracy, again, when uncontrolled, is as much to be feared as either despotism or democracy. * * From the history of the world, therefore, it would appear that will, however general, cannot be considered as a good basis of government. Servile men, indeed, who worship authority, adore an arbitrary king: prejudiced men, who are dazzled by birth and wealth, cringe to an arbitrary aristocracy: enthusiastic or ambitious men, who think or affect to think that there is no virtue in numbers, cry up an arbitrary multitude: but a philosopher, who weighs things calmly, sees, in all these disguises, the dominion of a frail, fallible mortal; and refuses to give unlimited

power to a being whose mind may be clouded by all the varieties of error, and whose will may be perverted by all the whirlwinds of passion."

It is right to recollect that this essay was produced long before De Tocqueville wrote his "Democracy in America." Its philosophy is that of an eclectic thinker. The following passage contains sound thoughts happily expressed :—

"Upon surveying the history of government, we see that the raw material, man, must be manufactured into something artificial before he is fit for the purposes of government; that he must be 'through certain strainers well refined' before he can assume the direction of his species. It is for this reason that all the most applauded governments,—Sparta, Rome, England, Holland,—have been formed upon the principle of mutual control. It is by dividing power among different orders and classes; by multiplying forms and privileges; by giving the people an attachment to settled rules of proceeding, and a habit of loving justice; by filtering the turbid current of popular opinion through various modes of deliberation and of counsel; by giving a sanctity to judicial bodies, before which rank and riches bend in submission; and, finally, by opposing a check to every act of passion, whether in chief, nobles, or people, that the whole society is protected against the abuse of those faculties of government, the right use of which produces some of the greatest of human blessings."

The Whig Families were much puzzled what to do with the ponderous provincial politicians returned to the House of Commons after the Reform Bill. New rich men, without any political ideas save the canting utterance of some crude formula of popular belief, came up to town and wished to enjoy the distinction of being considered public characters. They were not "clubable;" they thought more of the Budget than the Constitution; their three political estates were symbolised by three letters "L.S.D."

They were out of place at aristocratic assemblies, and their wives were not liked by the fair patricians who assist in governing the Upper Ten Thousand. The High Whig Party treated those Liberal M.P.'s. with new names, on the principle expressed in the foregoing passage that "the raw material, man, must be manufactured into something artificial before he is fit for the purposes of government!" The political and social processes, by which the politicians representing this "raw material" were converted into working Whigs and servile Liberals would be a nice chapter in politics, and supply some choice scenes for comedy. The finest Private Theatricals of the time, are the sayings and doings of patriots of the platform manœuvring with Parliamentary

agents. In the same essay Lord John Russell makes the remark :

“Political power is, generally speaking, a matter of permission ; and so long as a nation is tranquil, easy, and obedient, it is impossible to say that the power which rules it is not *de jure*, as well as *de facto*, a legitimate government. Restore to the people their sovereignty ; they will instantly delegate it afresh ; and there are times when a nation is more faithfully represented by the sword of Cæsar than by the senate of Cato.”

The Imperialists in France would echo the last sentiment, and the history of many countries in Europe testifies to its truth. Because Parliamentary Government has worked well in England, and is the only form suitable to our habits and tastes, we must not therefore infer that it would suit other communities.

Whether the thinking of the foregoing passages be right or wrong, none can deny that they exhibit philosophic generalization and trenchant style. It is after reading those passages, and many such might be quoted from Lord John Russell's political compositions, that we can appreciate those two stanzas from Moore's lines to his noble friend.—

“With an ardour for liberty, fresh as in youth

It first kindles the bard and gives life to his lyre ;

Yet mellow'd e'en now by that mildness of truth
Which tempers, yet chills not, the patriot fire.

“ With an eloquence, not like those rills from a height
Which sparkle, and foam, and in vapour are o'er ;
But a current that works out its way into light
Through the filtering recesses of thought and of lore.”

—Moore was very proud of having written those lines,—expostulating with Lord John Russell on his intention, nearly thirty years since to abandon politics. He used playfully to allude to them as the effusions of a real “vates.”

Ever since Lord John Russell has become famous in the Senate, he has been criticized with great severity by eminent persons belonging to adverse schools of thought. He has been satirised by Sydney Smith,—and very harshly spoken of in a work of ability, ‘The History of the Peace.’ The witty sayings of the late Canon of St. Paul’s are uncommonly sharp and shrewd,—but we should no more accept as historical verities his most amusing caricatures of Lord Melbourne, Lord Palmerston, and other leaders of politics, than we ought to think of taking Moore’s ‘Two-penny Post-bag’ or Byron’s invectives as authorities against Lord Castlereagh. ‘The History of the Peace’ is composed in the spirit of Philo-

sophical Radicalism; and in politics and in theology those who dwell in the same vicinage are often as contentious as borderers. Calvinists and Lutherans have written harder things of each other than either have done of their common adversary; and the next-door neighbours of the Liberal party have been very witty, very severe, and in many cases most unjust upon each other. His depreciators seize on the imputation that the essential failing of Lord John Russell is indiscretion. Thus, Sydney Smith wrote—"It is impossible to sleep easy while Lord John has command of the watch;"—and it was characteristically said in 1834—in words that flew over the town—"Johnny has upset the coach." And so, in the *Quarterly Review*, a well-known hand assimilated him to Lord Byron's ancestor who never went to sea but in a storm—the "foul weather Jack" of nautical annals; the allusion being probably suggested by the famous "Channel Fleet" witticism. At this point it is interesting to turn to Moore's lines, and see how the ideality of the poet converts into heroism what the critics on Lord John Russell have called "rashness."—

"With a spirit as meek as the gentlest of those
Who in life's sunny valley lie sheltered and warm,

Yet bold and heroic as ever yet rose

To the top of cliffs of fortune, and breasted the storm,"

—a stanza which illustrates a remark of Sheridan on Moore (as reported by Hazlitt),—"There is no man puts so much of his heart into his fancy as Tom Moore. His soul is like a particle of fire, separated from the sun, fluttering to get back to its source of light and heat."

Although with the political convictions resulting from thought, Lord John Russell is perhaps more a sentimentalist than any other politician of the day,—the traditions of his ancestry and the story of his famous race powerfully influencing his mind. He evidently *feels* that—

"— the branches that spring from the old Russell tree
Are by liberty claim'd for the use of her shrine."

—He often argues modern questions in the style of a historical revivalist, and refers to the opinions of Locke and of Milton, without taking into account what Locke and Milton might think now with the new social experience of modern Christendom. The Philosophical Radicals have always criticized him as not being enough of an economist in his political principles; and they aver that he ignores "the principles of social progress;"

as discovered and established by Bentham and Mill. The accusation of the (self styled) "Philosophical" Radicals registers the merit of Lord John Russell. He recognises the sway which passion has on communities, and ambition upon individuals. Speculative systems upon paper, Lord John Russell despises, and he only cares, like a thorough-bred statesman, for the systems which have worked, do work, and will work upon Human Nature as it is modified by climates, race, and last not least, by inspiring traditions and immortal examples. His "Letter to the Electors of Stroud" is an able defence from his own pen to the charge of being indifferent to progress. A more highly finished piece of political writing has rarely issued from any practical statesman.

Amongst Leaders of the Commons, Lord John Russell has been signally successful. The post is one of prodigious difficulty:—rightly filled, it may be called the most arduous political office in the world. Its duties must be discharged before a wary Opposition. It demands readiness in debate and resolution in confronting adversaries. There must be courtesy and good temper, without any tendency to cringe or cajole: that fault being very fatal. Often compelled to resist and sometimes to concede,—the Leader must do the first

manfully, and the last gracefully. There must be either great talent or vast experience in a parliamentary Leader,—but “character” is indispensable. Lord John himself once wrote with significancy,—“It is the habit of Party in England to ask the alliance of a man of genius, but to follow the guidance of a man of character.”

It cannot be denied that in recent years the political character of Lord John Russell has suffered considerably. Sir Robert Peel compromised himself by tergiversation, and Lord John Russell has depreciated himself by oscillation. After the long excitement arising from the settlement of the Corn Law Question in 1846, his Premiership was undertaken under great disadvantages. He increased his difficulties by extreme narrowness in the construction of his Cabinet, and by not opening up the prizes of political life to the Whig gentlemen of England, and by reserving the Cabinet exclusively for particular connections.

Lord Brougham denounced (but whom did he not denounce?) the Cabinet of Lord John Russell as one under which affairs “were administered with feebleness, incapacity, vacillation, and imbecility, in which measures were feebly proposed, tremulously supported, and weakly abandoned.” In 1851 the Cabinet broke down, and again in

1852, and in order to drive the Derby Cabinet from power in 1852 it was necessary to have a coalition. The bare statement of such facts records the maladministration of the Liberal Party.

He sported with the Protestant feelings of England in first stimulating a cry against the "insolent and insidious" advance of the Papal power, and in afterwards succumbing to Lord Aberdeen and the aiders and abettors of Cardinal Wiseman. When during the Coalition Lord John Russell made certain declarations about the rights of Protestantism, Mr. John Sadleir (then Lord of the Treasury) took umbrage, and indignantly resigned, along with two of his (political) associates. Lord Aberdeen told Mr. Sadleir, that "the opinions of the majority of the Cabinet did not agree with Lord John Russell;" and after that humiliating episode, Lord John Russell tried, as Leader in the Commons, to look the Opposition boldly in the face.

He deservedly lost ground in public estimation at that time by consenting to hold the Leadership after the policy of his Durham Letter had been contemptuously repudiated by his own colleagues, and after Lord Aberdeen had superciliously disavowed his views on Protestantism. It was a painful spectacle to see the once potent

debater, who had so often conducted his followers to triumph, browbeaten by the smallest of the subordinates of the Cabinet in which he served. Lord Aberdeen preferred that Lord John Russell should be disparaged, rather than that the Sadleir connection should be discontented; yet Lord John Russell continued to sit in the seat, but not in the station, of the Leader of the House of Commons. But he could not act a hypocrite's part. Nature was too strong for him. He had been mortified and derided by his Aberdeenite colleagues. He owed them nothing; they owed him much. He had lent his name to their crude combination, and to their false pretences of "administrative abilities." When England was agonised by the "horrible and heart-rending accounts" from the Crimea, Lord John Russell brooded over the situation of the country, of the army, and —— of himself. His part was taken. His colleagues had affected to disdain *him*; he retaliated by exploding *them*. They had lowered him, and he hurled them from power.

The national honour was in jeopardy; but his colleagues had been appointed with the connivance of Lord John Russell. He had even thought that their ambition was "commendable." The public mind heaved with anger, and a storm was ap-

proaching. Without a word of notice either to the Prime Minister, under whom he served, or to his Whig colleagues, Lord Lansdowne, or Lord Palmerston, or Lord Clarendon, the noble Lord, on Mr. Roebuck holding up his finger, ran from office and left the Sovereign to find a Cabinet! Was *that* "old English" policy?

Did he act rightly in doing so? What precedents are there in the annals of Party for such conduct?

He never should have joined the Coalition at all; he never should have played second to the Earl of Aberdeen, but once that he had done so, deference to the Queen, and to what the Queen's flag represents, demanded another style of conduct.

If matters had stopped there, Englishmen, with their readiness to make allowance for the rights of self-assertion, would not much censure Lord John Russell. But, unfortunately, he inflicted further damage on his character by his subsequent conduct. Lord John Russell well knew that Viscount Palmerston was no proper Chief for the the Liberal connection. He consented to abdicate the Leadership of the Liberals in favour of an ambiguous politician; and he then completed his mischief to himself by making that warlike declaration which amazed people after

the diplomatic transactions at Vienna were revealed. He says himself, and so say his friends, that this most equivocal passage in his career can be explained. As in a revolution, so in a negotiation for peace (it might be argued) dates are of great importance; days and weeks at a crisis are fraught with the eventualities of years. It is not improbable that the conduct of the noble Lord at that time will yet be explained by him more fully than heretofore. It is certain, however, that the conduct of the noble Lord, as still understood, has considerably injured his fair fame.

It was said of Lord Chatham that he often abated his energy; "but that even then, like the "spinning of a cannon ball, he was alive with fatal "and unapproachable activity;" and Lord John Russell, though not always emitting inflammatory sparks, is like a half consumed fusee, and may make his power for more explosions widely felt. The smothered vanities and disappointed hopes of several members of the Liberal party present him with weapons which so dexterous a tactician could skilfully employ. He has vast resources, and the retrospect of his career is strikingly suggestive of mighty downfalls, and more mighty resurrections.

His appearance in politics was heralded by too much preparatory praise; he was too hastily thought to be a failure; then his Parliamentary performances were considered as mere essays, and he was unjustly neglected; afterwards he was accepted as a useful ally, and then he was appointed the special manager of the Reform Bill. During the twenty years subsequent to the Parliamentary Revolution of 1832, no other statesman so powerfully influenced the conduct of the Whig and Liberal Party. Standing upon narrow and uncertain ground in politics, he has never cried "I surrender," and he has shown great intrepidity in defending a difficult position.

His political accomplishments, resulting from an experience of the best kind, are first-rate; he is the best living Parliamentary debater, and (now that Mr. Hallam is no more) he is the highest living authority on any disputed question in Constitutional politics. With the history of political religion in England, he is profoundly conversant; he appreciates with philosophical acumen the spirit by which each sect lives, and he knows more of the public and secret Party history of the last fifty years than any one else. He does not care for tattle, or gossip, but he appreciates those acts which indicate character, and reveal the secret

working of the subtlest of all mechanism, the machinery of the human heart. The auricular confessions in Downing Street are tenaciously engraven in his memory.

Subjects connected with the current aspects of Education, Religion, Constitutional Law, the intricate management of Irish Affairs, are particularly familiarised to Lord John Russell. On some of them, he possesses both profound views, and much special detail. On Foreign Policy his knowledge is less reliable. He has never, apparently, made up his mind as to the degree in which the interference of England is justifiable in Continental affairs. On Financial subjects he is no authority, nor does he understand the Englishman in the shop, so well as he comprehends Mr. John Bull with one foot in the stirrup going to mount the British Lion.

Lord John Russell always aspired to play a great part in the history of his age, and he has done so. His management, for many years, of the Whig Party was extremely clever, and especially so during the times when the Conservatives were assailing him in front, and while the Philosophical Radicals were attacking him in his flank.

In his discussions with Mr. Hume, Mr. Grote, Mr. Warburton, General Thompson and others,

Lord John Russell displayed the resources of a mind habitually conversant with the greatest questions in philosophical politics. During the Melbourne Ministry, he received little debating help from the pure Whigs, and his adroitness was often admirable. That Sir Robert Peel was afraid of him in debate is certain. He had a peculiar style of taunting Sir Robert Peel about his wavering propensity, which galled the conceding Conservative Chief.

When the reaction set in against the Whigs after the Reform Bill, Lord John Russell had not force to stay it. The enmity of Lord Brougham embarrassed him as much as the political friendship of Mr. O'Connell. To the Roman Catholic interest he was never a cordial friend; he recollected what Milton and Locke thought and wrote about the Papal pretensions, and he was disposed to agree with them. Just as a Roman Catholic Irishman, too, often commits the error of judging of England by the deeds of the Cromwellians, so Lord John Russell and the Bedford Whigs allow the seventeenth century to influence them too much in the middle of the nineteenth. Their tone upon the Papacy would be justifiable if there were Stuarts on the throne, or a House of Bourbon giving pecuniary aid to advanced Liberals for

the purpose of making a revolution in England. But we live under the House of Brunswick, and the mission of a Barillon in 1859 would be ridiculous. *Ignorantin* Catholicism is certainly a great evil in the old states of the continent, but the Bedford Whigs are only playing a retrograde game in coquetting with the platform of Exeter Hall.

The Durham letter was a great fault, and was as mischievous as if a Jesuit had purposely dictated it. The Whig Party suffered from it, for the Coalition could not have been formed without the aid of the Papal Brigade. At that time, it would have been better for Lord John Russell's fame if he had stood alone, and acted on his Protestant convictions expressed with the steadiness of principle. Both Lord Derby and Mr. Wilson Croker publicly expressed their disapprobation of the exasperating language used by Lord John Russell. He wished to do mischief to the Vatican, and he did it to himself. He set a spring gun for the Pope, and lamed himself with it.

The striking individuality of Lord John Russell is visible in the circumstance that the annals of Party do not record such another instance of a public character who, in his own person, exhibited the highest accomplishments of a philosophic

hinker, the habits of an artful factionist, and (occasionally) the temper of a firebrand. He has the airs of an aristocrat with the arts of an agitator. It is still more striking that so fiery a nature should often freeze his friends. Said Lord Albanley, one day when hunting, to a West End artist in pastry, "Why don't you hold horse hard, Mr. G——?" "Because he's so devilish hot, my Lord," replied the confectionary artist, uneasy in the saddle. "Why don't you ice him, Mr. G——?" inquired Lord Albanley. Lord John Russell has been far too frequent in his icing experiments on the British Bucephalus.

He is a statesman, with Tropical warmth in his politics and Arctic temperature in his manners. The health of his Party has often suffered severely from the way in which he takes it in a month to the most opposite political climates. His followers out of doors have been perspiring with exertions for one whose colleagues and allies sit shivering by his side. In the geography of politics, we should think of him as a Hecla. The eye is arrested by his bold and aspiring outlines; we hear his muttering thunder as the hour of convulsion approaches; there is smoke, and fury, and a dazzling eruption; we wish to approach nearer to examine the source of such wonderful display, but

on nearing the volcanic crater we are seized with sudden chill.

But it is in vain for criticism to disparage, or the voice of faction to cry down the many merits which give buoyancy to the reputation of Lord John Russell. He has the soul of an historical Englishman. A proud man and a bold one, he has not abjectly cringed, or basely intrigued like some of his contemporaries and rivals. He has not stooped to procure praise upon mercenary terms; he may, at times, have been too haughty, too loftily reserved, too isolated in his social sympathies, and too abstracted in his ideas; but the permanent interests of his party he steadily struggled for. A Whig he started in public life, a Whig he has been, and with the last tremor of his parting breath, he would murmur forth his aspirations for spiritual and civil freedom.

A nature so idolatrous of the memories of Hampden, and Locke, and Somers, is often smiled at amongst servile politicians, and the invocations in his Litany of the Patriots may be too monotonous; but his worship of their characters is sincere, and often he has shown by right gallant conduct, that he has the soaring mind, and hardy individualism of an Independent Whig; and the great men of other days, if their voices could be consulted,

would acknowledge that the throbbing of his heart revealed a spirit compatriot with their own.

To say of him that he has committed great political faults, is only acknowledging that he has been for forty years in politics. He has been factiously virulent, and too austere indifferent to the fate of his followers and to the standard-bearers of his Party; but he never betrayed any cause of which he was the accepted champion; he never swallowed by piece-meal the articles of a political creed which he had professed for half a life-time; he never recoiled from a difficulty because it was perilous, and neither the frowns of the Court, nor the clamour of the crowd, nor the roar of what is called opinion from a thousand invisible presses, have ever frightened him. Call him capricious, and factious, and ambitiously reckless; mock him with the poisoned champagne foam of Sydney Smith's ironical humour; assail him with the vitriol of Wilson Croker; hurl at him the thundering words of Lord Brougham; compose a cento against him, with invectives conned at Netherby, and grand harangues from the Pitt-and-Fox-pair of lips of Lord Derby, and after you had showered hard words upon his career, you would still find, even if you were armed with a forty-*Junius* power of destructive defamation, that you could

not rase the name of Lord John Russell from history's page, or the generous recollection of his country.

His name will stand as that of one who, born with a frail body, had a firm soul, and who, with less of the inventive force of genius, and without the governing qualities of the greatest of his predecessors, yielded to none in thirst for the true glory of serving the land that bore him; it will stand as that of one who, in times when the cause of Reform was unfashionable, gave such attraction to it by his argumentative advocacy, as to extort praise from the lips of the classic Canning; it will stand as that of one who, in a Parliamentary Revolution, held a foremost place, and upon whose acts and words important eventualities depended; it will stand as that of one who did not change with the changelings, or fall away from his faith, like the feeble; who, in days when his Party was in gloom and dejection, was never faint of heart, but pressed onwards in the van, though opponents of might and power were drawn in array against him; it will stand as that of one who often quickened the public mind with high-souled expressions of thought and principles worthy of a British statesman—and after the panegyrics of friends, and the invectives of enemies will be alike forgotten, after

the fever of an agitated age shall have passed away, and when other celebrities of his time shall have perished in the dust, the storm-beaten name of "J. Russell" will signally stand to distant generations as that of a Parliamentary Worthy, whose frequent faults as a Chief of Party caused many ephemeral evils, but whose faithful services to the cause of freedom worked great permanent good, and endeared his memory to the Commons of England.

CHAPTER IX.

MR. DISRAELI.

OWING to a difference of social arrangements, the Leadership of the Tory Party has generally been managed in a contrary manner from the Parliamentary Chiefship of the Whigs. The Institutions of the country, and more especially the Church, together with the Landed Interest, are the objects which most attract the hopes and fears of Toryism. The Whigs have always looked to Opinion as the instrument for ruling the community, but they have always taken especial care that the manipulation of opinion shall remain practically within their own hands. They do not desire to promote from the ranks of their political army, and, when, for the sake of appearances, a clever and experienced subordinate has been raised to the Cabinet, his place in it has been made uncomfort-

able, and he has been taught to feel how little power was assigned to him.

It would not satisfy the Whig Party if men like Pitt and Dundas undertook to manage its Parliamentary affairs. The Families would feel that the *prestige* of their great connection was seriously compromised, if the Leadership of the Whigs was assigned to orators, and men of bold nerve and brilliant faculty for dealing with affairs; and when one understands the peculiar esotericism of the Whig Party, it is not to be wondered at that the Families would object to the Leadership being given to any one born out of their charmed circle.

The Tory Party, in its nature, is like a great Corporation, and it does not feel its dignity compromised by having oratorical representatives. The Whig Party is like the Committee of a Public Meeting, and canvasses for the weightiest names in order to grasp OPINION, which is, in many cases, the end and the means of its ambition.

It is a long time since the American War was closed on the fall of Lord North, and it is curious to observe how after all the changes we have seen in the political world, the Whig Families adhere to the Leadership being placed in the hands of the family connection.

Mr. Fox was a much younger man than Ed-

mund Burke ; he was reckless, profuse, and prodigal ; his vices were deeply injurious to his influence, though his extraordinary powers almost eclipsed his errors. He was the nephew of the Duke of Richmond, and he was the son of a Peer, and the Leadership of the House of Commons was accordingly given to Charles Fox, who confessed with the frankness that did him honour, that he “had learned more from Edmund Burke than from all other sources of knowledge.” By Parliamentary etiquette, Fox then remained Leader of the Whigs to the time of his decease. Then Lord Howick was chosen Leader of the Party, and after him, Mr. Ponsonby, who was connected with the Whig Families.

Mr. Ponsonby had been a practising barrister in Ireland ; he was not a wit, or an orator, or a man of original mind. In the “New Whig Guide,” there is a report of a case in which a certain Henry Brougham was indicted for having called Mr. Ponsonby “an old woman ;” he was an ineffective speaker, and he was not a man who could either powerfully bias, or greatly command opinion —yet he was made Whig Leader in the Lower House, when Lord Howick had become Earl Grey. Would not Mr. Grattan, or Sir Arthur Pigot, or Sir Samuel Romilly, or Mr. Whitbread,

have made better leaders than Mr. Ponsonby? But the three first were not connected with the Whig aristocracy, and though Mr. Whitbread had married the sister of Earl Grey, he was only a great brewer, and the dignity of the Whig Party would have been lowered. They, doubtless, recollected George Selwyn's *mot*, when some one remarked of the elder Whitbread, that he was "making a great lunge at popularity." "He's only playing at *Carte and Tierce*," or, as Mr. Sheil put it, "He's patriot to a brewery!"

When Mr. Ponsonby died, a sort of provisional Leadership was given to Mr. Tierney, but his health was bad, and, in point of fact, Mr. Brougham made himself the virtual Whig Leader in the Lower House; but Lord Althorp was still Chief of the Whigs, and was made Leader of the House of Commons in 1830, and on his removal to the Peers, Lord John Russell was chosen, and then Lord Palmerston was selected.

It has been different in the Leadership of the Tory Party.

Mr. Pitt, from being a barrister in the Western Circuit, was made Leader in the House of Commons, under the Earl of Shelburne, and he was Prime Minister afterwards in a few months. His family were new, though as Chatham's son, of

course he worked with the spell of a glorious name ; but the poverty of the Pitts, and the fact that King George had to make a provision for the family, detracted from his personal weight. Mr. Pitt's fortune was only ten thousand pounds, and when there was a prospect of his losing the Premiership, during the first insanity of George the Third, Mr. Pitt actually intended to go back to the bar, and seek for practice. With the head of the Grenvilles (the first Marquis of Buckingham) he was never on very friendly terms, although they were cousins, and Pitt would have declined pecuniary aid. He was no Grenvillite, the mastery remained with him, for he made the Grenvilles —“Pittites.”

But the Tory Party did not care whether Mr. Pitt was the cousin of the great family who lived at Stowe. They heard his oratory, they witnessed his capacity for affairs, and he was the King's Minister for them. So, also, when Pitt died the Tories had no scruple about taking Mr. Perceval a practising barrister for their Parliamentary Leader. He was able to do the public business, and to manage well for their Party ; they made no opposition to Castlereagh, though he was an Irishman, bred in the Irish Parliament and a member of a new family ; they had Mr. Canning

as their Leader, and though they disliked both his temper, and his intrigues, they never objected to his birth—an Irishman—the son of an unfortunate man of letters who died in misery, and of a subordinate actress. Then came “the cotton spinner’s son,” as Leader of the Gentlemen of England. The personal pretensions of Mr. Pitt, Mr. Perceval, Lord Castlereagh, Mr. Canning, and Sir Robert Peel, were not of so aristocratic a nature as those of Mr. Fox, Lord Howick, Mr. Ponsonby, Lord Althorp, and Lord John Russell.

When Sir Robert Peel deserted the Party of which six years previously he had boastfully proclaimed himself the Leader, Lord George Bentinck was chosen as Chief. “Never,” said an old Statesman, “was there a better Chief for a Party in difficulties. He was not a good speaker, but he had every other quality a Leader should have. If a young Conservative made a good speech, there was Lord George always ready to congratulate and stimulate to further efforts. If on the contrary, a member broke down or disappointed expectations, Lord George was always at hand to cheer and to console, and to point out the reasons of the failure and to rouse the desponding new member. His attention to every member in his connection was unceasing, and he was always ready to lend a

cordially patient and attentive ear, and to aid in bringing a man out. He was an admirable man of business, and he fully deserved the applause given him for courage, skill, and great qualities of mind."

Parliamentary Chiefship certainly requires the possession of many qualities not often found in the same person. There must be energy, assiduity, great knowledge of society and politics, capacity for prompt speech, and the power of rapidly dealing with sudden difficulties. Only some of these qualities can come by training and experience, and the Chief pays a heavy price for his pre-eminence by his intense toil.

It is a peculiar weakness amongst the Gentlemen of England not to seek for the high honours of Chiefship, unless they can be tolerably sure of gaining them. They do not care to aspire, and be rewarded only with the silver medal; they must have the gold one or they will not "grind" for it in Committee rooms, and in the constant labour of getting up the matter requisite for successful speeches. Many an English gentleman sitting behind the Conservative Leaders in the old Opposition from 1835 to 1841, might have said to himself, "Why should I aspire to Parliamentary Leadership? I have talents, it is true. My friends tell me so, and I know it myself; but I could only play a

second-rate part by the side of Sir Robert Peel, Lord Stanley, Sir James Graham, and Mr. Gladstone. *Aut Cæsar aut nullus.* Why should I kill myself with incessant work, and gain only a second-class place, and perhaps not be admitted to the Cabinet after all? I will content myself with sitting in Parliament, and doing a fair share of public service, but I disdain to aspire to secondary honours." Can it be surprising that such thoughts should pass through the minds of gentlemen with ten thousand a year, with parks and stately mansions, and pleasant neighbourhoods, and all the delights of happy homes? Is it in human nature that such a class could be expected to toil for the silver medal in Parliament? Doubts about obtaining the highest honours keep back not a few admirable persons with all the qualities fit for being excellent Secretaries of State.

From the vast increase of social development, and the load of work thrown upon Parliament, it is impossible for any but gentlemen regularly trained for public life to aspire to high official responsibility. The knowledge required for Parliamentary Chiefship is considerably increased. Social questions cannot be debated in a dashing style, and a Charles Fox in our times would have to change all his habits. Personal knowledge cannot be crammed ;

a man must steadily acquire it ; and even the ready-tongued gownsmen from Westminster Hall, find, when they enter the House of Commons, that they have not knowledge enough for the assembly. Mere speaking is not sufficient, for addresses made from briefs have no weight with a proud and jealous audience.

Now, when the Chiefs of a Party, in such times, suddenly turn round on their followers and desert colours, and tell them “you can fight your own battle,” it will be at once seen that such conduct is unfair and inexcusable. The followers could fight their own battle, if they got time to train up leaders and Parliamentary speakers, but Chiefs are not to be raised in a single session.

At such a crisis, too, it is a weakness in English gentlemen who are untrained, not to stand forward unless they are strongly confident that they really possess the required qualities. They have got already a capital station in society, and why should they expose themselves to public ridicule as failures, or to being “written down” like half a dozen politicians that might be named ?

When Lord George Bentinck died, the Gentlemen of England, after full deliberation, chose Mr. Disraeli to be their Chief in the Lower House

of Parliament. They had Parliamentary observation of him since 1837; they could judge of his energy, his eloquence and his reticence, his self-command, his knowledge of men and things, his manners, his merits and his resources, and his capacity for transacting all the laborious duties of the post. They had all the *data* for a choice.

There were then sitting not a few amongst the Gentlemen of England, who could have aspired to eminent Parliamentary station if they had been trained to it, but it is late to begin an exciting career after forty years of age. Two years of excessive Parliamentary work seriously injured Mr. Croker's health, and Lord George Bentinck sunk after three years hard Parliamentary exertion. When work of a new and violent kind suddenly comes upon men verging into middle life, there is danger of a break-down. The physiological law affects all modes of life alike. Barristers and doctors who are rapidly pushed into great practice after comparative idleness are frequently observed to stagger and sink under their toil. So, in the war of political life, great exertion, if habitual, can be endured; but, if a novelty, it cannot be sustained, except by men of extraordinary mind and physical vigour.

Such considerations, it is known, influenced not a few of the Gentlemen of England in declining to seek for leading places in their great Party, when they were deserted in 1846 by their trusted Chiefs.

With the approbation of a most powerful connection, Mr. Disraeli was chosen Leader of the Conservative Opposition. Several of the representatives of the great territorial houses acquiesced in that choice; it was made under the auspices of the Earl of Derby, and it was approved of by eminent professional politicians, who aspired to coronets and Chief Justiceships. There was no lack of Parliamentary courtesy to the new Leader. The Liberal Party, at large, appeared to think that the Gentlemen of England had made a proper choice. Lord John Russell, at the time, observed that the "Right Honourable the Member for Bucks, deserved his elevation on account of the skill displayed by him in the management of the affairs of his political friends."

It had always been held, and is still held by Statesmen, that the choice in either House is a matter of internal and private political arrangement. The Opposite Party has no right to dictate who shall be chosen by their adversaries for their Parliamentary General. In 1851, the Russell Cabinet

broke down, and the Earl of Derby was sent for by the Queen, and after leaving the Royal Presence, he went straight, as the Court Circular recorded, to consult with the chosen Chief of the Conservatives in the Lower House of Commons. Lord Derby declined at that time to form a Cabinet, and the Russell Ministry got another turn of power.

During all that year (1851) there was no demonstration of any personal kind against Mr. Disraeli. In 1852, the Russell Ministry again broke down, and Lord Derby undertook office, and Mr. Disraeli became Leader of the House of Commons.

In the September of that year active steps were taken to bring about a coalition.

A particular influence at that time used extraordinary pains to destroy simultaneously the personal character of Mr. Disraeli, and the political reputation of the Whig Families. The resources of organised power were malignantly concentrated for the double destruction of public character.

It was one of the "Curiosities of Literature" in our time, that the connection which was daily engaged in endeavouring to destroy Mr. Disraeli, was availing itself at the same time of all his effective satire against the Venetian system. In

attacking the Whigs, this connection loaded its guns with ammunition from "Vivian Grey," and "Coningsby," and their mode of assailing Mr. Disraeli himself, was borrowed from the precedents of the democrats and incendiary politicians who had "written down" Lord Castlereagh.

As it was held by many public men, both Whig and Tory, that Sir Robert Peel had not acted fairly to his Party; so it was also held by them that the mode of assailing Mr. Disraeli's personal character in an organised manner was contrary to fair play, was at variance with political manners, and was dangerous to Parliamentary freedom. A voice now hushed in the tomb uttered eloquent thoughts on the conduct of the banded vilifiers of Mr. Disraeli. 'It is to be lamented for the sake of Letters that the hand is now for ever powerless which wrote this most interesting political piece.

"A biography of a man in the prime of life, extending to nearly seven hundred pages, and sold for no less a sum than sixteen shillings, would argue that its subject was a very remarkable person. If a panegyric, he must have many friends; if an attack, he must clearly be a formidable opponent. If we could suppose "the intelligent foreigner," so often quoted of late, to be quite ignorant of our world, we might fancy him

under the circumstances exclaiming, ‘Who is this Benjamin Disraeli, whose deeds, while yet living, can fill so bulky a tome, and whose name is the text of so many articles in newspapers and reviews?’

“It might be replied, in the first instance, that Mr. Disraeli is an individual who, sixteen or seventeen years ago, a trial of what is in a man, entered the House of Commons, the humblest member of the Conservative party in that assembly; that he is now the leader of the Conservative party in that assembly; that he has even been, for a time, Leader of the House of Commons itself, and conducted its proceedings with dignity, temper, and general approbation. It might be added that, during the whole of this period, it has never been pretended that he ever forfeited a pledge or ever deserted his party, while, during the same interval, there is not one of his rivals who has not changed both his politics and his connections.

“But then it is urged by his assailants that there is a preceding period of his life when his conduct was not so staid, consistent, and methodical, but much the reverse. This period would extend, so far as we can collect, from his twentieth to approaching his thirtieth year. The researches of his assailants have made us all familiar with

incidents which in any other man's life would have been forgotten, or have never emerged from their obscurity. Everything in this man's life is ferretted up and mapped out. Who is not acquainted with the newspapers, the novels, the wanderings of his youth ; of his fierce struggle to emerge from the crowd ; of his sharp correspondence and his ready controversy ; of his fantastic politics and party schemes ; of his feud with O'Connell and his feud with the Whigs ? All this has been described over and over again by malignant but superficial men, who fancy they are annihilating him, and is now reproduced in the ponderous tome before us, the avowed manifesto of the Puseyite party, as if all these wildnesses were circumstances which affected the moral character of the individual they assail. We confess we have long looked upon all these strange adventures in a very different spirit. We feel obliged to the detractors of a man of genius that they should have accumulated with so much industry, these records of his early years. They might otherwise have been lost to us. With us the contemplation of this early life amazes the spirit and touches the heart. We perceive only the restlessness of a creative mind, the struggles of a strong and solitary will, the impatience of unrecognised power, the

waste of enormous energy without a guide, all that turbulence of genius which is so strange and rare ; and we have no doubt that the day will arrive when this period of the life of Disraeli will be pondered over with as tender an interest as we now muse over the fitful or fiery youth of a Rousseau or an Alfieri.

“ If a fairy had accumulated upon the cradle of a child every spell which would blast success in life, it would seem that she need only have collected the accessories of the life of the hero of this literary and political biography. He was the child of a recluse student without a friend or a connection : he was born of a race which was *then* considered infamous : he had not what are esteemed the advantages of a conventional education : he was destined to a laborious and obscure profession. Out of this he comes forth a Minister of State, a transcendent orator, a writer of unexampled grace, a varied and accomplished scholar, and with a greater personal following than any man of the day.

“ But then it is said that, in rising to this eminence, Mr. Disraeli has been an Ishmael, and that his hand has been against every man, and especially, according to this book, ‘ every distinguished man.’ We once heard Mr. Disraeli

say that, throughout the many combats and controversies in which he had figured, he had never been the first assailant; and, from the remarkable frankness which distinguishes his conversation, we believe him. For 'all distinguished men,' however, in the book before us, read 'Sir Robert Peel.' On this head we may perhaps have as much right to speak as the compilers of the biography, or any other assailants of Mr. Disraeli. The writer of the present article was a follower of Sir Robert Peel, and one of those who did not desert that great statesman in his fallen fortunes. It was unfortunate for Sir Robert Peel that Mr. Disraeli was not included in his arrangements in 1841, for, if so, Sir Robert would probably have died Prime Minister of England. The omission, however, was not unfortunate for Mr. Disraeli; for, with that tenacity of purpose and fidelity to his friends which distinguish him, he would have devoted all his energies to his chief, and never, perhaps, have been a chief himself. The common opinion that Peel did not appreciate Disraeli is a mistake. The present writer is aware that Sir Robert wished to offer office to Mr. Disraeli in 1841. This was prevented by the political parasites by whom it was the weakness of the great Minister to be surrounded, and we

owe to this circumstance those immortal sketches of the Rigbys, the Tadpoles, and the Tapers, which Beaumarchais never surpassed. At the same time we must express our protest against the cant that a person who believes his claims improperly slighted is not to make his power felt by the leader who slights him. One thing is quite certain, that every man under such circumstances will do so who can ; and if few succeed it is only because their inability proves the discrimination of the Minister. Notwithstanding the fierce struggles of 1845 and 1846, Sir Robert Peel lived to appreciate Mr. Disraeli, and, strange to say, his last public act was to cheer, in the House of Commons, the author of his downfall. It was when Mr. Disraeli closed the debate on the famous Palmerston discussion. This is not rumour or hearsay, for the writer of this article sat next to Sir Robert Peel on that occasion. A few days after, when the horrible tragedy was over, amid a group of mourning disciples, we heard Mr. Gladstone urge as a consolation, ‘ Peel died at peace with all mankind. He even lived to cheer Disraeli.’

“There is one great error into which public writers on Mr. Disraeli are apt to fall. They attribute his position solely to those qualities

which are obvious to the multitude, and fancy they are making very shrewd observations when they inform the world 'that he is used but not trusted;' that he is 'a necessary instrument, without whom his associates would do if they could;' 'that he is tolerated by them, not cherished.' Now, having lived a long while in the House of Commons with Mr. Disraeli, though latterly in a hostile camp, and also having had many social opportunities of forming a just opinion on this subject, we must express our belief that the present influence of Mr. Disraeli is owing not so much to his *public* as to his *private* life. If any of the mortifying vicissitudes which have occurred of late years to Lord Palmerston were to happen to Mr. Disraeli, we verily believe that, were he to retire below the gangway, there would be seventy or eighty men of the best blood and highest character in England who would accompany him. Mr. Canning was famous for his following, which he hardly deserved, for he once disbanded and deserted them, but still his personal friends ultimately carried him through. Mr. Canning never had half the personal following of Mr. Disraeli.

"Lord Lyndhurst is considered not a mean judge of character. He was the first of our lead-

ing men who brought forward Mr. Disraeli, and there has subsisted between them a confidential friendship of upwards of twenty years' duration. Lord George Bentinck was not a man who could be practised upon by a sycophant or an intriguer. His manly and somewhat blunt nature recoiled from glozing, and he detected in a moment, and never pardoned, the man who was not straightforward. Yet it is well known that the feelings of Lord George Bentinck to Mr. Disraeli were those of entire devotion. Lord Derby is a very clever man—perhaps the *cleverest* man in the country. His quickness of perception is unrivalled, and he is not embarrassed with any inconvenient degree of sensibility. He is said, too, to be very proud, and not a little prejudiced. He was just the sort of man who would be prejudiced against Mr. Disraeli, who had even attacked the Government of which he was a member. It was notorious in the House of Commons that this prejudice existed. Yet the moment that the untimely end of Lord George Bentinck brought Lord Derby and Mr. Disraeli together—what happened? That which has happened with every first-rate man who has become acquainted with Mr. Disraeli, except, unhappily, Sir Robert Peel—complete confidence and cordial regard. It is

the same with all his followers who are in his intimacy. They are bound to him by a sentiment of personal devotion. Now, this is not an effect to be produced by talents alone, however brilliant. Sheridan could never do this, nor even Mr. Burke. Mr. Canning had very great advantages. He was the hero of a then very powerful University, and the brother-in-law of a duke; but we repeat he had not the personal influence of the libelled hero of the 'Literary and Political Biography.' They are qualities superior to talents, and even genius, that produce such an influence: a noble disposition which attaches men, and in which all men irresistibly confide.

"The 'literary and political' assailants are very much alarmed at the enthusiasm of the Oxford under-graduates in favour of Mr. Disraeli. The cheers of Christ Church Quad. appear to have disturbed the self-complacency of some of their prime patrons. Now, the undergraduate enthusiasm seems to us to be the most natural thing in the world; nor can we be surprised that youth should sympathise with one so capable of charming the imagination of the 'new generation.' We were not present at the Oxford triumph; our fealty is pledged to another seat of learning not less renowned; but of this we feel persuaded,

that Cambridge must be very much changed since our time if the reception of Mr. Disraeli in the Senate-house were less fervent than in the Theatre, or if St. John's and Trinity were to yield in the enthusiasm so much deplored in the college of which Mr. Gladstone is a member.

“If the object of the ‘Literary and Political Biography,’ and the sermons simultaneously preached from its texts by the various Puseyite organs, be to detach the Conservative party from Mr. Disraeli, we predict an overwhelming failure. There are certain politicians who are, no doubt, in a false position, and who would perhaps not be grieved to resume one more natural to them; but they will not be permitted to do so by preparing the way for the sacrifice of Mr. Disraeli by systematic libels. He will outlive their spite, or they will only be remembered in connection with him like the heroes of ‘The Dunciad.’ The career of the late Chancellor of the Exchequer is not closed: we believe its brightest portion is in the future. We have watched its wonderful vicissitudes with a deep interest since our college days, when we read for the first time ‘Contarini Fleming’ with a glowing heart and a kindling cheek. Its author was decried as a writer, and he is now one of the most popular, as he will

certainly be the most enduring, author of the day: he was coughed down in the House of Commons in his maiden speech, and he lived to produce oratorical effects in the same assembly which have never been equalled in our time, and which we must doubt whether the eighteenth century ever surpassed. He has only been driven from power by a coalition against him by every man of talent of every party in the house except his own, and that coalition already is nauseous to the nation. We have invariably observed that, whenever Disraeli has received a check, it has only been the herald of a great advance; and that, when the world has believed him beaten, he has always been on the eve of his greatest victories."

CHAPTER X.

SIR JAMES GRAHAM.

PALEY once remarked, that, although not a politician, he would not take a handsome annuity in exchange for the pleasure that he derived from observing the characters of public men, and all the incidents of Parliament. This privilege of observation and discussion he numbered amongst the decided advantages enjoyed by the subjects of a free country. England is dotted over with innumerable centres of activity, influenced by local traditions and peculiar social developments. Provincial districts are certainly too often ruled by the local leaders, but what these leaders *can* and *cannot* do is powerfully controlled by the magic influence of "character." It is neither territorial sway, nor the possession of vast capital, nor practised powers of public speaking, that exclusively govern. All these modes of influence can be

greatly augmented or seriously diminished by what is said and thought about their owners. Wealth, credit, eloquence shrivel before the odium of unpopularity,—as they swell in their growth and deepen in their power when those who possess them are personally beloved.

The same thing takes place even in the “High Court of Parliament.” Humanity there also follows its natural law of respecting the bold and sincere, and sympathizing with whatever is courageous and genial. It would be easy to cite many a written and spoken eulogy from Tory minds to such characters as those of the Marquis of Lansdowne, Lord John Russell, and Lord Palmerston ; but on examining the variety of criticisms offered on Sir James Graham, during the shifting vicissitudes of his career, it becomes plain that from the most opposite quarters he has been subjected to grave severity of incrimination.

Seen and heard on the occasion of one of his celebrated speeches, Sir James Graham could scarcely fail to rivet the attention of an intellectual spectator. His commanding figure and highly imposing air, with his tone of measured dignity and display of elocutionary grace, his felicitous selection of matter and sustained force of logic, would of themselves commend the speaker to

marked notice from a competent observer. Nor could such a person fail to note the evident proofs of high mental culture shown in the rhetoric of the display. The whole speech, from the gravity of the careful exordium to the close of the stirring peroration, would be seen to make up into that "great whole" more often aimed at than attained by artists in words. "What a fine speaker!" would be the not unnatural exclamation of any auditor who listened to Sir James Graham for the first time; and an extraordinary idea of the versatile Baronet's oratorical powers would be left upon the mind of a political novice, who might wonder that such a parliamentary performer had not more dominant influence in the Senate.

Yet further experience of the House of Commons would show that even to the oratory of the member for Carlisle some weighty exceptions must be taken. Though too argumentative to sink into a declaimer, he wants that promptitude and inspiration on his legs which makes a truly great debater. Excelling in prepared statement, he does not equally shine when he has suddenly to reply to a previous speaker of the first rank. Though in a different school of eloquence, the orations of the member for Carlisle are nearly as much "set speeches" as those of the late Mr. Sheil. Their

frequent recklessness of language is thus more remarkable, as their careful preparation is so obvious. Seldom has an eminent writer of speeches so often committed himself by unlucky escapades ; nor can we forget, as Mr. Disraeli once told him, that “in the oratory of terror the Right Honourable Baronet is a great proficient.” Except Mr. O’Connell, no other public man of the late, or present, age has so often employed the language of intimidation. It was worse than indiscreet, and undignified in a Privy Councillor, to warn the House of Commons of the number of Roman Catholics in the army, when the Romish Aggression Bill was under consideration ; and “the soldier knows the reason why he has a better mess,” was another unparliamentary offence of the same kind in more recent times. Thus, also, when inconsistently pleading for an open committee, after having first strenuously resisted all inquiry into the War-office blunders, Sir James Graham annoyed both the House of Commons and the public press. Imitating, not for the first time, a well-known and admired passage in one of Mr. Croker’s powerful speeches against the Reform Bill, the member for Carlisle talked of “that bauble,” alluding to his old plaything the mace, and threatened that the public press would van-

quish the Commons of England ! He then intimated at the same time his conviction that the British press would not keep secrecy, even if warned by authority that publication of certain evidence would injure the public cause ! In more than one memorable instance, the history of English journalism honourably refutes such a harsh insinuation.

Yet these and other kindred defects will not be enough to account for Sir James Graham's want of ruling authority in public affairs. It is not merely to such points that the terrible "*but*" of his critics in society always refers. Indiscretions of the tongue like those of Sir James Graham would in another man be compensated for by his undoubted official aptitude, his admitted energy in managing a department, and industry in mastering the details of our intricate social problems. Even such unpleasant incidents as his "dark" attack on Recorder Shaw might be palliated by considerations of marked personal antagonism. But a long career of habitual vacillation, an innate propensity to adopt the extremes of opposite parties, and afterwards rapidly recalcitrate, must detract fatally from the weight of any public character in England.

There are three modes by which a British . .

statesman can exercise great authority over public affairs—first, “on his legs” in Parliament, where he can defend his own policy, or assail that of his opponents; secondly, at his desk in Downing Street, where he can weigh the conclusions of official persons, compare their facts, and balance proposed changes against prescriptive systems; and thirdly, there is the subtle and intangible but inspiring influence of his character, and the sway of his genius and experience over other ruling persons. In other words, *debating, administrative talent, and moral power*, are the influences by which our Walpoles, Pitts, Foxes, Cannings, Wellingtons, and Peels exercised their genius for rule. It is in the third, and noblest, of these faculties that Sir James Graham, so eminent in the other two, is deficient. Place him in any department—and he will readily discern its most useful subordinates, and skilfully use his power of employing them for the public service. Let an official difficulty arise—he will readily master the precedents in similar cases, and circumspectly regard the circumstances of the new question before he will conclude as to what ought to be done. So, “upon his legs” in the House of Commons, he brings to bear upon debate an imposing person, a well-sustained

(though artificial) manner, excellent elocution, and nearly all the resources of a practised rhetorician, blending together the tact of the debater with the graces of a declaimer. But let a great public crisis arise, let rival agitations prevail, let some governing spirit be required to rule the discordant elements of party, and, as his forty years' career proves, Sir James can be accepted only as an able and artful ally—never as an authority to guide events. With all his resources as a speaker, and his official aptitude, he seems to want the moral mastery so indispensable to first-class statesmanship. The personal venom which this eminent actor has always thrown into his speeches, whether at the Tory or at the Liberal side, detracts greatly from his historical dignity. For example, mark the intense bitterness of the declamation in the following passage, in an invective delivered against the Ministry of the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel in 1830 —

“Sir, I have heard something of the luxury of the present times. I do not know whether the example was drawn from the gorgeous palaces of kings—or the rival palaces of ministers, splendidly provided for them by the public—or from the banquets of some East India Director, gorged with the monopoly of the China trade—

or from some Jew loan contractor, who supplies hostile armies with gold drawn from the coffers of the Bank of England, and lends money to France arising out of profits on loans contracted here in depreciated paper, but which must be paid in gold."

—"The gorgeous palaces of kings" was of course in allusion to Windsor Castle, then recently restored, and Buckingham Palace then in progress of erection. "The rival palaces of ministers, splendidly provided for them by the public," was an oblique allusion to Apsley House, which "the Duke" had just refaced and improved, after having resided for some time at the Treasury. The allusions to "gorged East India Directors," and to the Jew loan contractors, were made in a style more befitting 'Cobbett's Register' than the speech of a statesman addressing the Senate,—and they contrast very strongly with the tone of Sir James's Conservative speeches only four years afterwards! The vehemence with which he has spoken on opposite sides of the same question is very remarkable,—and was once brought under the notice of the House of Commons with great effect by the present Master of the Rolls. On the occasion of the "Aggression Bill" in 1851, Sir James Graham having made a personal and taunting appeal to Sir John Romilly, the latter replied by

quoting the following words, delivered by his assailant in 1835, when he assisted in defending the Irish Church.—

“ Whig principles consist no less in love of liberty than in *jealousy of Popery* as an instrument of *dominant political power*, and in *ardent uncompromising attachment to the Protestant religion as by law established in these realms*. No death's-head and cross-bone denunciations against the free exercise of the election franchise; no prayer of mercy limited to Heaven, but denied on earth, to the unhappy Catholic who shall dare to vote for a Conservative candidate &c.”—(1835).*

Of the speech to which Sir John Romilly replied, it is enough to say, that it was marked with high rhetorical ability, and a total disregard of the tone which Sir James Graham had assumed for several years before. The *Edinburgh Review*, in an article on Parliamentary Reform which appeared soon after, stated that if “ a general election had just then occurred, Sir James Graham would probably have been excluded from Parliament,” unless the Roman Catholics elected him. It is worthy of notice also, that the same influential organ published a most damaging character of Sir James Graham in the year 1834, when he

* Hansard, 3. S., Vol. 27, p. 440.

seceded from Lord Grey along with the present Lord Derby. This is the most remarkable, as the *Edinburgh* admitted that the honour and motives of Mr. Stanley (Lord Derby) were above reproach. During the time of Lord Melbourne's Ministry, the late Lord Spencer (the "Lord Althorp" of the Reform Bill era) at a dinner of the leading members of the "Useful Knowledge Society," remarked—"Well, when I was in the House of Commons, often I was on thorns lest some terrible indiscretion should be committed by Sir James Graham, and lest something should leap out of his mouth which should injure our side." The records of Sir James Graham's tortuous career supply innumerable proofs that Lord Spencer was justified in his apprehensions. Thus, when Sir Robert Peel, during the Repeal crisis, was proceeding to found the Queen's Colleges, Sir James Graham did the Ministry great damage by telling the Roman Catholic members "that conciliation with Ireland had reached its *utmost limits*:"—an indiscretion of which Lord John Russell and Lord Macaulay soon availed themselves. It was nearly at the same period that he had the rashness to commit himself by assailing the Recorder of Dublin Mr. Shaw, M.P. for the University) with facts relating to Mr. Shaw which Sir James could have learnt

only in the *private* transactions of "party." In fact, in attacking his adversaries, like an awkward fencer, Sir James over-reaches himself. But his indiscretions, and too great proneness to personality and supercilious treatment of his adversaries, were doomed to special retribution in the Mazzini *espionage* case. All people agreed that the whole of Sir James Graham's conduct on that unpleasant occasion left a most unfavourable impression behind. Nothing could be more unfortunate than the defiant manner with which he in the first instance met the charges vigorously preferred against him by Mr. Thomas Duncombe. On a question on which the feeling of Englishmen is peculiarly sensitive, he exhibited "that hardness and impassibility of temperament which are impervious to censure or to obloquy." But he had to change his tone when the late Mr. Sheil and Lord Macaulay applied the knout with great severity. It was most remarkable to see the enjoyment which so many members of Parliament felt at "the Cumberland Yeoman" being in a scrape. The feeling towards him showed the extent of his personal unpopularity amongst the friends and the foes of the party to which he then belonged.

The catalogue of Sir James Graham's awkward

collisions of a most unpleasant kind is painfully long. They began with Mr. O'Gorman Mahon in 1831—with the Melbourne Whigs in 1834—with sundry of the Cumberland yeomen in 1837—with Lord John Russell in 1841 (when the noble Lord took a memorable distinction between the characters of Lord Derby and Sir James Graham)—with Mr. Duncombe in the letter-opening case, and with Mr. Macaulay (July 2nd, 1844)—with Recorder Shaw in '46—with Mr. Layard in 1855, and afterwards with Sir Charles Napier. In those cases he had the worst of it; but when attacked by Major Beresford he had the best of it.

Thus, in looking at Sir James Graham's extraordinary course, we see that he has been a candidate for contradictory honours. There is no faction which at times he has not vehemently supported, and afterwards violently opposed. A century hence, philosophic historians might doubt whether there were not three or four different "Sir J. Grahams" in Parliament, during the reigns of George IV., King William, and Queen Victoria. They might plausibly conjecture that no single statesman could have appeared in such a political monopolylogue. Sir James Graham's votes and speeches, make one think of the Wolffian hypothesis on the Homeric Poems. Imi-

tating the critical reasoning followed by the German commentator, we might, with references to Hansard and contemporary history, affect to show that there had been certainly two Sir James Grahams in the age of Queen Victoria, and that further historical discoveries would probably reveal that there were not less than *three*. We could pretend to great nicety of discrimination between "Sir James," popularly called "the Cumberland Yeoman"—Sir James, the great Conservative statesman—and a third Sir James, attacked by the *Edinburgh Review* for his vehement support of the friends of Cardinal Wiseman. It would seem to take "three single gentlemen" to roll into one Sir J. R. G. Graham. First, a "Cumberland Yeoman," wanting to knock down the Funded Interest; then a lacerator of Privy Councillors, out-Cobbetting Cobbett in his tirades; next, a defender of the Irish Protestant Church, in 1835, warning the House of Commons (*vide* Hansard) "that Whig principles consisted in jealousy of Popery, as an instrument of power," and afterwards panegyrising the religion of Rome in 1851, as "the faith of Fenelon, and the creed of Sir Thomas More, which touched as with fire from Heaven the tongue of Pascal;" &c., an advocate for secret investigation when he was himself charged with opening letters;

then a denouncer of "Inquisitors," in 1855, though he told the House of Commons not to offend the Emperor of the French (a privilege which, it would seem, he had reserved for himself;) figuring foremost in the counsels of the Carlton Club, and noisiest of all at the orgies of the Reform Club—toadying a British Admiral one month, and all but slandering him the next; pouring forth jeremiads at one time—but we must stop. Chapters would be required to recite the contradictions of this versatile and able, but most inconsistent public man, whose changes are stamped in his constituencies, Cockermouth, Carlisle, Cumberland, Penrhyn, Dorchester, Ripon, and Carlisle again !

It was once wittily remarked by a shrewd humourist, "That Sir James Graham, after all, appeared to have one really fixed idea in his mind, viz., that England was progressing to a Republic, and that he should play for being its first President." In that suggestive saying, the strange recklessness and wild plunges of Sir James Graham are happily indicated. He is always for casting himself and his political fortunes into the lottery of change. There is a characteristic lubricity in his nature which forbids all hope of steadiness in purpose. Even a vane on a steeple should be

consistent in turning with the winds. But Sir James Graham is not a weathercock, but a whirligig. His rapid circumvolutions would amuse a philosopher, while teaching a plain man of the world the real "reason why" such eminent parts, such decisive though desultory vigour, such hoarded knowledge, and such effective eloquence, have failed in securing "double-firsts" in the course of public honours.

Unstable as water, Sir James Graham could never be relied on as Chief of a Party. He can only produce his results, while acting subordinately to other minds. When he attempts to stand alone he totters. He has made brilliant speeches, and yet cannot be said to be a man of genius; he has done bold deeds, and yet he has never become the hero of any party in the land, winning no more lasting consideration than belongs to a great special pleader in the politics of England.

CHAPTER XI.

MR. GLADSTONE.

CEREBRAL natures—men of mere intellect, without moral passion, are quite unsuited for the first places in governing mankind. They may theorise profoundly, or spin the subtlest webs of argument, but they can neither rule Cabinets, nor control empires. Something more than brains are required for mastering beings of mixed elements of life. There must be the presence of sturdy power, the fascination of masculine resolve, before numbers of men will yield to a leader. In the practical affairs of the world, strength of character is worth nearly all the other qualities. What hordes of clever men swarm through the crowded thoroughfares, and yet how few are the resolute characters amongst them! The courage inspired by a vigorous volition is absolutely necessary before genius can be constant to its own in-

spiration. Mirabeau well said that "a person without a strong character is not a man, but a thing." No British statesman so thoroughly exemplifies these truths as Mr. Gladstone.

Of his dazzling talents and accomplishments the world has not a second opinion. His aptitude for sustained reasoning, his Ciceronian flow of choice language, and the supple adroitness with which he can wind through the mazes of a complicated question, have often won admiration. His gladiatorial feats of intellect could not fail to gratify those fond of following acute argumentation, supported by academic eloquence; but an attentive view of his career enables us to see how grave are the defects in a man whose character wants stamina.

Ingenious, versatile, and eloquent, Mr. Gladstone has never shown the capacities of a political leader. The fact is more remarkable when we recollect how high is his private reputation. Unlike Sir James Graham, the member for Oxford University is not obnoxious to charges which more or less compromise a man's personal dignity in the Senate. And yet, though not sinister, the course of Mr. Gladstone is almost as oblique as if he had taken the member for Carlisle as his model. It has been the privilege of his admirers to have heard Mr. Gladstone speak with all his power on

the opposite side of several questions, and on no side at all on some topics. Constantly setting difficulties for his adversaries to solve, he has not unfrequently placed himself in the ridiculous posture of being tortured in his own subtleties.

The frequency of his falling into pitfalls excavated by himself, is enough to caution any great Party against choosing Mr. Gladstone for its guide. On the greatest political questions of his time, Mr. Gladstone's former self has always been his most formidable adversary. He deliberately applied his intellect to the subject of Church and State, and he has passed through a series of developments. We have seen him leaving the Cabinet of Sir Robert Peel rather than increase the Maynooth endowment, and we have heard him justifying the aggression of Cardinal Wiseman. He has been anti-Whig, and anti-Conservative; he has been both at the same time, the first to advocate a Coalition, and one of the first to destroy it. A career of such instability would cover him with ridicule, but that the ingenuity of his intellect extorts admiration, even while his perpetual process of transition leaves him without confidence. A mind so forcible in its faculties, and so facile in conversion, is an object worthy of study.

Returned to the House of Commons for Newark,

by the influence of the late Duke of Newcastle,—Mr. Gladstone early attracted attention. He had previously signalized himself in the Oxford Debating Society,—and the reputation of his talents had preceded him. In those days (1833-34) the Conservative party was in a prostrate condition, and the aid of the young Oxonian was eagerly welcomed. In his twenty-fifth year he had already made a position for himself in the House; and Sir Robert Peel, in his first short administration, appointed him a Lord of the Treasury—and subsequently, Under-Secretary for the Colonies. On the fall of Peel's Ministry in April, 1834, Mr. Gladstone passed to the opposition benches—universally recognized as one of the foremost champions of what in those days was called “the great Conservative cause.” Debating in Parliament did not afford sufficient stimulus to the active intellect of the “Student of Christ Church;” and he did what politicians and statesmen are generally cautioned to refrain from doing—he wrote a book. Anonymous pamphlets are allowed as conventional weapons in politics, as well as letters to journals and reprinted speeches; but in all these cases, some latitude is given to the exigencies of rapid composition or the excitements of oral delivery. But a book is supposed to be prepared for the

public eye with clear purpose on the part of the author; and if he wishes in after-times to modify his opinions, the *litera scripta manet* stares him in the face, and exposes him to the damaging charge of inconsistency. Mr. Gladstone's political friends were, therefore, alarmed when he announced his polemical treatise.

He was assailed for "the extreme uncharitableness of his opinions," and "for the artifices of his logic;" and though in a literary sense the work was successful, and attracted much attention, it may be admitted, that experienced politicians had in the treatment of its author another argument against the policy of statesmen writing books. Mr. Gladstone was ere long placed in a Parliamentary dilemma. After Sir Robert Peel returned to power in 1841, the "Unitarian Chapels Bill" came before the Legislature for discussion—and subsequently the increased grant for Maynooth excited the curiosity of observers as to how the "Student of Christchurch" would vote. In the first instance, Mr. Gladstone supported the Bill of Lord Chancellor Lyndhurst; but, as Lord Lyndhurst himself showed in an unrivalled argument, the "Dissenters Chapels Bill" was a question eventually belonging to jurisprudence, and not resting on theological tenets. On the

second question of Maynooth, Mr. Gladstone resigned his office, rather than vote for the measure proposed with the united support of the Duke of Wellington, Sir Robert Peel, Lord Stanley, and Lord Lyndhurst. He defended his conduct in a speech, in which he quoted Burke to the effect that, "in politics an Englishman stops short of the conclusions to which his speculative reasoning would lead him,"—an observation which, as was said at the time, should have led him to retain his office. At a subsequent period, (1851) on the case of what was called the "Aggression Bill," Mr. Gladstone delivered speeches which it was perfectly impossible to harmonise either with his opposition to the endowment of Maynooth, or with his previous work on "Church and State." It is also remarkable, that after having taken a part of decided hostility to the introduction of the Jews into the Legislature, he subsequently abandoned his opposition.

Upon all these changes of opinion I offer no further remark, than that two things are plainly shown:—first, that Mr. Gladstone propounded theories without having carefully arrived at a philosophical synthesis,—or in other words, his generalization was hasty and precipitate. The second remark is of a broader application. The career of Mr.

Gladstone shews plainly that it is extremely difficult in our English public life to unite the functions of a thinker for the closet with those of an orator for the Senate.

The intellect of Mr. Gladstone is undoubtedly a remarkable one,—and well deserving critical analysis. His understanding is rapid in apprehension, powerful in retention, and versatile in capacity. There is scarcely one of the sciences in which he could not with facility become a proficient. Vigorous and plastic, and with all its faculties under the ready command of its owner, his intellect would be enviable, but for defects which will always cause doubts as to the soundness of its conclusions. He is too precipitate in theorizing, too subtle and overstrained in his inductions—and he places too much credence in the philosophic potentiality of the logic of the schools. These are blemishes which seriously detract from the moral weight of his assemblage of brilliant faculties,—as an administrator, an orator, and a writer. But there is a still greater defect in Mr. Gladstone's mind, as seen in his writings, his speeches, and his official conduct,—all considered without the least regard to the truth of his speculative opinions. He wants one of the greatest gifts that a mind can possess.

The deficiency will require from us a few words of explanation.

Directness, the power which is most wanting in Mr. Gladstone's intellect, is visible in all the illustrious intellects of the world. It is seen in the speeches of Demosthenes and Fox—in the tragedies of every great dramatist (whether the unities are preserved or not)—in the masterpieces of Literature and of Art. It is a quality more easily felt than described. The painters have long recognised it in their favourite rule of "variety in uniformity," and in the stress which they lay on making up the component parts of a picture into a *whole*. It is that power which grasps a hearer, or a reader, in first-rate oral argument or in writing. It is a power present alike in the speeches of Lord Erskine, and in the writings of Cobbett, so successful in appealing to the crowd. Without it, orators and authors become involved, confused, and therefore ineffective. "To look straight at facts," is often the most difficult of all things; and if we wish to see a notable instance of this great power, we need only turn to the 'Wellington Despatches,'—where it is stamped on every page.

It would take too long to give illustrations from Mr. Gladstone's speeches and writings of the want

of *directness* in his otherwise powerful and even brilliant intellect. His work on 'Church and State' presents a pregnant example of this want. I much doubt whether the author had a clear view present to his mind of what he intended to put forward. The manner in which he mixed the two words together, and his difficulty in explaining where the "State Conscience" was to be lodged, sufficiently show the uncertainty of his intellect, and its proneness to generalize precipitately. We should be ready to give latitude up to a certain point to all expounders of theories. We cannot expect that on difficult branches of moral questions a writer can state all his conclusions with the clearness of a mathematician with his fixed forms:—but there is a limit which cannot be passed without hazard to effect. Diction the most glowing, logic the most subtle, illustrations the most apt, will fail to sway us, if over the whole of a brilliant writer's work is diffused a nebulous haze, amid which old common-places are apt to assume the outlines of large originality, and slender finespun fallacies affect the outward aspect of realities.

Apparently taking pleasure in puzzling others, Mr. Gladstone often bewildered himself. A jury of M.P.'s selected impartially would find it im-

possible to return a verdict as to his creed. He has been a Tory upon the turn, a Liberal of a loose sort, and a Christian in a state of chrysalis. What his next development might be would defy the computation of the most scientific observer. As yet he has never been a Whig, and his ingenious intellect would find it difficult to weave a creed for "the families." To drag Parliament into a labyrinth of which he alone should possess the logical clue, that he might enjoy the confused crowd asking for deliverance from his aid, would seem to be his mission. He asks the House to weigh a series of scruples with him; but gives it nothing to weigh them with; and he enjoys the sight of honourable members tantalized while he refreshes himself conscientiously.

He is always going through some obscurely difficult task, as ingeniously protracted as an algebraic problem, but at the end there is no reward for his labour. In his political equations, after a frequent recurrence to the rules of "permutation" and "alternation," the final $x - y$ of the Gladstonian process remains equivalent only to the indefinite. He argues, to cause doubt, and not to elucidate, and on many occasions it is as hopeless to derive practical value from the brilliancy of his intellectual light as it would be to try

and kindle a cigar from a rainbow. His woof of casuistry is thus only marvellous as a waste of ingenuity. To expect to take in sound knowledge or substantial truths from his artfully-spun sophistication would be like trying to catch a shoal of fish with a net of cobwebs.

Invalid card-players play picquet with a dummy; and a favourite mode of Mr. Gladstone's exercitation is to set up a sophistical dummy, bristling with rusty fallacies, and armed cap-à-pie with old prejudices, and then he gallantly strips the lay figure of its ponderous blunders, and looks round triumphantly for admiration at his prowess. In the morbid anatomy of defunct errors he works his scalpel with singular energy. His stabs at what are slain are really fearful; but he has not the muscularity of mind, the athletic vigour of intellect, and the bold hardihood of temperament required for a great party strategist in England. He has a fluctuating temperament and a feeble volition. He never, like a really great man, applies the whole of his mental faculties to a subject; but as a mathematician thinks with only a portion of his understanding.

Though Mr. Gladstone has always been the dupe of his own subtlety; he seems to have acted sometimes on the impulses of a hot and hasty

ambition ; as if he would find in precipitation a clue to escaping from his casuistry. There was nothing in his antecedents to warrant the supposition that the ex-member for Newark—the quondam Tory pet of two Dukes of Newcastle—would commit himself to a Coalition based principally upon a large measure of Parliamentary Reform. Then, after Lord Aberdeen and the Duke of Newcastle left office, Mr. Gladstone, to the amazement of many, joined Lord Palmerston ! Yet his subsequent rushing away from the Premier was even more extraordinary than his first adhesion to him. In neither case did the Right Honourable Gentleman give sufficient reasons to the public for such remarkable conduct.

And then Mr. Gladstone conducted himself in a most extraordinary manner. He was a party to the Crimean expedition. With his eyes open he joined Lord Palmerston, and yet, after leaving him on the ostensible ground of “no inquiry,” Mr. Gladstone poured forth a most emphatic condemnation of the expedition. His contradictory conduct in all that relates to the Russian war can only be matched by his authorship of the work on “Church and State”—his promulgation of a “A State Consicence”—his leaving the Ministry of Sir R. Peel rather than vote for the grant to

Maynooth—and his subsequent championship of the Papal Aggression !

His personal antecedents partly explain the contrarieties of Mr. Gladstone. Close inspection reveals the strata in which his opinions lie in layers together. Scotch by descent, he is of Liverpool by birth, and of Oxford by sentiment. With the new aristocracy (the “plutocracy” of Coleridge), and with the old Church, his personal sympathies are equally strong. A præ-Lutheran in his theology, he is a post-Cobdenite in his political economy, and while his contemporaries believe in the Constitution, or in utilitarianism, or in Church and State, Mr. Gladstone’s sole trust is in his logic. Yet after trying to split himself into metaphysical hairs, he remains as great a riddle to himself as to his neighbours. Nature has not given originality sufficient to assimilate his antagonisms, and thus greatly gifted, but not great, he remains an incarnate political conundrum, always puzzling to friends, and often most amusing to his foes, in spite of his abilities.

For a man who perplexes his followers can never become powerful. He who is always making his mind up, and setting the sentiments of to-day against those of yesterday, cannot be a lord of thought. Opinion spurns the control of tremulous

volition, and seeks the sway of intellects that can wield free minds with the sovereignty of will. In our age a mere dialectician could never dominate, for the time is past when the rulers of Christendom were selected from the serfs of Aristotle. A statesman like Mr. Gladstone—so subtle, so sharp, and so indecisive—can only realise the unsatisfactory mission of a Parliamentary Erasmus. He can sap one side more easily than he can strengthen the other. Admired and dreaded by both, he can never enshrine himself in the affections of either.

To be incapable of moral passion is for a man of mere intellect to be doomed to remain a nonentity. Without the emotions that soar, and thrill, and enkindle, it is impossible to attain to a grand moral vision. When Mr. Gladstone aims at philosophy he attains only to casuistry. His synthesis is not large; a sense of the vastness of the questions which he has attempted to decide has never dawned on his mind. The means by which he tries to solve them shows the limits of his views. The line and plummet can give us the mensuration of lakes and rivers, but to measure the starry spheres more lofty science is required. So there are questions within the apprehensions only of divining minds. On such complex problems

men of formal logic and finished rhetoric fail, where more genial natures, by their sympathies and aspirations, are fertile in suggestion. With all their wonderful qualities, the Jesuits have only partly succeeded. Ephemeral good and immense evil have been the fruit of a society of disciplined intellects, without manly emotions, family feelings, or national passions.

And it is impossible not to observe that there is a parallel between Mr. Gladstone's mode of reasoning on affairs, and that followed by the sons of Loyola. It is one of the arts of the Jesuits to exaggerate the worth of logic, and to disparage the beautiful instincts of home, family, and country. The intellect of Mr. Gladstone is eminently of that kind most prized by the Jesuits, keen, subtle, and with innate propensities to polemical exertions. What their society is to the Jesuits his own individualism is to Mr. Gladstone. He is an Order unto himself, and he supports his own interests as much from mental zeal as from self-love. "It may be fancy," said a man of genius to me, "but, looking on Mr. Gladstone and Mr. Sidney Herbert sitting side by side, the latter with his rather saturnine face and straight black hair, and the former eminently handsome, with his bright, cold smile, and subtlety of aspect, I have often

“thought that I was beholding the Jesuit of the closet, really devout, and the Jesuit of the world, ambitious, artful, and always on the watch for making his rapier thrusts.”

It is these phases of his character that must ever prevent Mr. Gladstone from becoming a great representative spirit amongst Englishmen. His nature is alien from that type of manhood—frank, resolute, and direct—most prized amongst a people who recoil from all that is tortuously refined. In English politics, Mr. Gladstone stands on the narrowest footing, extremely eminent, but strangely eccentric in his intellectual isolation, a Simon Stylites amongst the statesmen of his time.

But Mr. Gladstone must undoubtedly be accepted as a brilliant representative of that class of the community who derive their wealth from commerce and their prejudices from the Universities. His social and political vitality are clearly much affected by his Liverpool origin and his Oxford training. We see the marks of his non-aristocratic origin in his freedom from traditional party spirit. His mind, unlike that of Lord Macaulay, has no partly natural, partly acquired..... deference of a sentimental kind to “the great families of England.” To his intellect, “the terri.....

torial constitution," panegyricized by Mr. Disraeli, must appear absurd, as his own "Oxford Logic" and "State Conscience" to the author of "Vivian Grey." We rather miss the historical element in his Parliamentary speeches. Of national antecedents he seems to take comparatively little notice; and he tries to solve difficult social subjects with the elaborate apparatus of a logic, less perspicuous than, and almost as abstract as, the arguments of the late Sir W. Grant. His speeches have none of that racy English idiom, that homeliness without coarseness, that happy mixture of pithy sense and popular frank manner, which are almost classical in Parliament. There is in them too much of the academical arts of persuasion, too great a parade of logic, inducing the suspicion of undetected sophistry. Yet, the power displayed when "upon his legs," and at a pressing emergency, by Mr. Gladstone, is admirable. The ease and supple adroitness which he manifests are dazzling in themselves, and as gladiatorial feats evoke the admiration of the Senate. Proficient in the mechanical parts of an orator, with perfect command of language—no extempore speaker in Parliament excels Mr. Gladstone in the finished style and logical arrangement even of his unprepared speeches. He shows to more

advantage when personally listened to than in the closet.

One of Mr. Gladstone's finest displays of talent was in the debate in which Lord Derby's Cabinet in 1852 fell from office. On that occasion, the concluding night of the discussion was occupied nearly altogether by Mr. Disraeli and Mr. Gladstone; and those who were present will not forget the displays of eloquence made—worthy of the proudest days of Parliament. Mr. Disraeli confessedly made an extraordinary *tour de force*—under very trying circumstances, calculated to depress and dishearten an orator. Jaded with excessive fatigue, from being the main man of business in his party—with an unexpected coalition of hostile parties in his front—personally assailed by a host of adversaries—and representing a sectional and then defeated cause—the Member for Bucks stood up to the last encounter with desperate energy, and fought for his flag with those dauntless qualities which always obtain admiration from a large audience of Englishmen. Scalping his assailants right and left, bearding with unfaltering nerve his coalesced and triumphing opponents, he denounced their projects, and criticized the antecedents of some of his political censors with galling severity. Exulting in his

command of language, he met bitter taunts by thundering invectives. In a vehement and fiery style of declamation rarely heard now-a-days, he poured forth a flood of incriminatory rhetoric—and with buoyant self-reliance appealed to the prejudices of his partizans and lashed their passions. The circumstances of the crisis, and the speaker's eloquence made this one of the most effective oratorical displays heard within the walls of Parliament in modern times. It was the stag at bay—and fighting under the smart of his ministerial death wounds. To reply to such a speech required talents of a rare order. It was two hours past midnight—and the House was eager to divide. If the orator who had just sat down had spoken under circumstances calculated to dishearten, the orator who had arisen had the difficulties to contend with of an audience at once excited and jaded, and the advanced period of the debate. Disregarding the signs of impatience in his hearers, Mr. Gladstone rapidly and artfully wound himself into the ear of the Commons. Roused, himself, by the great effort of his adversary, he strained his powers to the uttermost, and became grand with natural passion. For two hours he enchained the attention of that audience—and with masterly art he vindicated the policy of Free Trade,

and inveighed against the Protectionists. Nor was there any other debater than Mr. Gladstone who possessed the union of financial knowledge, readiness of logic, and rare Parliamentary eloquence requisite for replying to Mr. Disraeli on that eventful night. This was the greatest success as a speaker ever attained by him, and was in itself enough to stamp his name in the annals of Parliament.

It was, indeed, a curious circumstance, that on that night both Protectionists and Free Traders were satisfied with the efforts made by the two Parliamentary debaters who had wound up the prolonged struggle with so splendid a display of personal prowess. Here were two men, who had in that last and crowning debate of a Parliamentary campaign publicly carried the palm of superior eloquence from a host of emulous rivals. One was the son of a Liverpool merchant who had risen from being a small shopkeeper—the other had fought his own way to reputation and power by pen and tongue. Neither belonged to the “great families” of England—neither had the *prestige* of traditions and territorial sway. Each owed his political power and his personal ascendancy in the Senate to his own genius.

CHAPTER XII.

REFORM AND THE TWO PUBLIC MINDS.

IN his speech on the Reform Bill in 1831 Sir Robert Peel stated :—"This is the first Parliamentary Reform brought forward by Ministers of the Crown *for four hundred years.*" Our Parliamentary system, as it existed up to 1830 was undoubtedly ancient, and depended much upon prescription, though social changes had often altered its vital nature. It was powerfully influenced by the Unions with Scotland and Ireland, by the rise of the commercial classes in the days of Walpole, and by the new wealth and massive fortunes of the East and West Indian interests. The word "Reform" is of old date ; and Clarendon rather applauds than censures Cromwell for his designs about introducing a Parliamentary Reform. The vicissitudes which this question has undergone deserve consideration.

It might be a cause of astonishment to many persons that a rule so full of anomalies as the old Parliamentary system should have stood so long without change or positive disapproval. The explanation is easy. After the Restoration, the great political question was only another form of the sanguinary controversy in the days of Charles I. The question up to 1688 was as to the power of the Crown and the nature of the Cabinet; and the introduction of the word and thing called *Cabinet* was a virtual Parliamentary reform of no ordinary importance. After 1688, and down to the Treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle in 1748, the dynastic question absorbed all the attention of the country. The Septennial Act was a sort of *coup-d'état* to defeat the Jacobites; and while the Stuarts were plotting for the recovery of the Throne, electoral controversies would have been out of season. The ascendant Whig Party, when the House of Hanover was firmly enthroned, was too satisfied with its power to venture on the perils of innovation; and it is amusing and instructive to listen to Liberals in our own days saying, "We have a great majority as we stand, and why should we look for more reform, which might possibly let in the Tories?"

In the middle of the last century the great

Whig Families mainly monopolised the borough interest, and, having a decided majority in the House of Peers, they dictated to the Crown. Lord Chatham, when he was the "great commoner," nobly struggled against the oligarchy, appealed to public opinion, threw himself on the "City," which played a high political part in the last century, as Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and other vast centres of activity were unknown in those times. Simultaneously with, and subsequent to, the American War, there was a wide general feeling in favour of Parliamentary Reform. Associations were organised in Yorkshire ; the printing press groaned with pamphlets, and the subject was discussed repeatedly in Parliament. Burke and Lord North were opposed to Reform ; Charles Fox and his immediate followers *professed* to be in its favour. But the difficulties attendant on any practical solution were found to be immense.

Among the first of these was the question, "Whether rotten boroughs were private property?" And, curiously enough, this question was interwoven with "new men." Great merchants had founded families by means of nomination seats ; and the first Pitt entered Parliament by means of his family's borough. To-

wards the close of the last, and at the commencement of the present century, a great blaze of reputations were associated with the nomination boroughs. Even Lord Macaulay, in our own time, entered Parliament for Calne, a seat under the control of the Marquis of Lansdowne. Several of the *Edinburgh Reviewers* owed much to rotten boroughs. Canning became an enthusiastic champion of the close system. "He flashed," said Coleridge, "such brilliancy about the Constitution "as it stood, that its ruins were not discernible "amidst the blaze of his genius."

While the personal successes and the glory of ambition were thus associated with rotten boroughs, the reaction caused by the French Revolution added to the force of existing prescription, and almost placed the borough system on a level with the sanctity of private property. The cause of Reform fell, also, into bad hands; and the state of the country after the battle of Waterloo, the transition from war to peace, the reduction in prices, the discontent of the working classes, the fury of their leaders, and the factiousness of the Whigs, compromised the character of Reform, and stopped its progress.

In 1826 "Reform" assumed a new shape. Mr. Canning pronounced the statement of Lord John

Russell on "Moderate Reform," in that year, as "the best speech on that question he ever heard." From that date down to 1832 the Conservative party endured heavy losses, and had to submit to disasters. The strategy adopted injured the fortunes of the Conservative body. One great cause of them was, that the Conservatives had not made up their minds in time about how far change might be introduced.

"Reform" was proposed by the Grey Cabinet as a necessity in 1831; it was accepted with passion by its followers, and it was carried by the country in a phrenzy. The King's Ministers in 1831-2 acted like a Cabinet of Tribunes. It was right that there should have been a large, bold, and popular measure; but the circumstances of the case, the antecedents of some of the Tory Chiefs, and the rash pledges of some of the Whig allies made deliberation at such a time as vain as a day-dream. The national instincts, and the solid interests of the money-holding classes balanced the popular excitement, and England was saved from convulsion. Yet no one should wish to see our society subjected to such feverish excitement as lasted during the reign of William the Fourth. Revolutionary alarms gradually subsided; the community returned to safer ways; and the features of the old English

character were again visible after an age of spasmodic turmoil.

Popular opinion has since been turned from wild and speculative projects, and directed to useful and feasible ends. Education has been vigorously promoted ; the health of towns has been judiciously improved ; and the action of Religion upon the masses has been called forth with energy. Railways have promoted internal intercourse ; amusements for the million have given common enjoyments to opposite classes of society ; Art has been encouraged, and the public press has been cheapened and improved. Any one who considers what has been done in the last twenty years must acknowledge that, without any regard to "party," there have been vast changes and improvements in England and its society.

In a progressive country like England such a series of changes, safe, practical, and wholesome, are only in accordance with the instincts of its inhabitants, and the traditions of their race. The history of England is one of social growth and national expansion ; but, strangely enough, mere political reform is not one of the grand means by which England has advanced. The rise of our mighty Empire, the acquisitions of Canada and the West Indies, the gradual erection of our

stupendous power in the East Indies, our influence on the Continent, the progress of our mercantile marine, the discipline of our famous Navy, the manufacturing developments of the north—all these, and similar social growths, were entirely unconnected with political reform. Yet it is to these, and to kindred developments, and not to political changes, that England owes its vast opulence, its wide-spread power, its great resources, and its civilising sway.

Such growths would not satisfy the longings of the credulous masses, nor the purposes of ambitious political connections, bent on monopolising all the advantages which may arise from the advocacy of "Reform." The popular imagination in all countries has an ignorant credulity in there being some short road to an El Dorado for the working classes. In 1848, the Revolutionary Spirit through Europe, with its enthusiastic delusions and unsatisfied desires, made Thrones and Dynasties topple to the dust. The masses believed that they could achieve much, and their ignorance made them overrate the force of intrigue and corruption amongst the Governments which they overthrew. In England, "the Charter," with its five points, was the grand fallacy in which large portions of the working orders be-

lieved. The Whigs were in office in 1848, and they denounced the "mob" and "demagogues." At another time the Whigs would have called the populace by the name of "the People."

After the close of 1848, and the total collapse of Chartism, the Liberal Party appeared to acquiesce in what seemed to be the general feeling of the country, that Social Reform should be actively fostered, and mere Political Reform laid aside. Such a course of action might have worked well for the country, if there had been able administrators in office. But "the families" could only exhibit the second-rate men of a past and more brilliant age. Lord John Russell was an excellent debater and a vigorous administrator in matters of pure politics, but his cast of mind, and his special acquirements, were not suitable for the settlement of social and financial questions. His colleagues were inferior to himself, (with the exception of Lord Palmerston) and his Cabinet sunk from sheer exhaustion; and then when the Conservative party came into power, and after certain economical questions had been decided, it was found necessary by the Liberals to get up a new cry, and Political Reform was again adapted by the Whigs as their means for acquiring and retaining power.

The country, therefore, was left no option about the discussion of a Political Reform. The question has been forced on the Legislature and the public, and it will be necessary to watch the conduct of Party, and thoroughly to comprehend the whole eventualities of the case. Parliamentary influences have brought the subject on, although a large portion even of the Liberal public cannot be worked up into feeling enthusiasm about Reform.

Let it not, therefore, be forgotten that Parliamentary Reform has its social as well as its political aspects. When Conservatives insist that their large political connection, their landed estates, and commercial wealth, their gentry, and their numerous adherents in the Church, the Universities, and the learned professions, should receive an adequate share of representatives in Parliament, in that case they are contending for *social* as well as *political* rights. "Society" in England is far more complex than the mere political constitution. English "society" has prejudices and habits peculiarly its own which cannot be embodied in an Act of Parliament. The query "How will it work?" is the test by which Englishmen strive to decide upon the merits of a new scheme; and the main difficulty in dealing with Reform is to devise some

measure which would be accepted in redemption of Parliamentary pledges, and which would not at the same time, incur the risk of a rejection by the House of Peers, and by all that is venerable and solidly influential in the collective community of Englishmen.

When the Bill of Lord Grey's Cabinet was agitated in 1831 and 1832, the question of "How will it work?" was often asked. The Liberals, of all shades, answered that it was a glorious measure, and would regenerate England. Two years afterwards a great change came over the opinions of many amongst them, when they beheld the English Parliamentary Dissenters working in vigorous concert with the Irish Repealers for the overthrow of the Established Church. A prodigious reaction set in, and at the dissolution in the winter of 1834, although there was a small majority in favour of the Liberals, yet the polls throughout the country were singularly close. The experiment of the Grey Reform Bill proved this conclusion satisfactorily—viz., that if the great institutions of the realm are supposed to be in real danger, the national feeling is so thoroughly sound and loyal that a reactionary and defensive movement is certain to be aroused, which in its turn must become the popular passion

of the time. The Monarchy and the Church were thought by many to be in real peril from 1833 to 1841. But after Mr. O'Connell had become historical, after Chartism had been exploded in England, and Young Irelandism crushed, and after the great mass of the English people had become alienated from great democratic movements, in consequence of the dire events which had followed the continental conspiracies in 1848—after these changes had taken place, another result of the working of Lord Grey's Bill of 1832 was then made visible. The nature of that result demands attentive consideration.

Amongst the ablest opponents of the Grey Bill, the late Mr. Croker was particularly distinguished. Unlike Sir Robert Peel, Mr. Croker had studied the question for a long time, and his mind was familiarised with all the eventualities dependant on Reform. In opposing the Bill, Mr. Croker contended that the measure would either work a revolution, or else that it was calculated to secure an ascendancy for the Whig Party. Sir Robert Peel, on the other hand, seemed puzzled in dealing with the measure. His mind was without deep convictions on the subject, and a counter Reform Bill was proposed—"too late." In leading the reactionary movement against the Whigs,

Sir Robert Peel earnestly counselled the Conservatives to depend on their social influence, and, imitating the "Agitate, agitate, agitate" of Lord Anglesey at a memorable crisis in Ireland, Sir R. Peel desired the Conservatives in 1835 to "Register, register, register." Experience has proved that Sir Robert Peel and Mr. Croker were partly right and partly wrong. When Sir Robert Peel told the Conservatives to depend on their social influence, that eminent statesman was correct in thinking that the Conservatives would sway Parliament so long as the Monarchy and Church were in danger; but, on the other hand, if Mr. Croker to some extent exaggerated the perils of revolution in England, that veteran controversialist was right in his anticipation that if the Constitution survived the Grey Bill, England might be exposed to the despotism of a Party ascendancy.

"Revolution" is not to be feared in our times; but there is great danger of some huge political jobbery being palmed off upon the public. The country may be deluded, the public mind may be irritated, and Parliament may be trifled with by a deceptive scheme; and it is impossible to calculate what might occur from one of those periodical bursts of indignation to which all free communities are subject.

In such a time, and under such a peculiar dispensation of circumstances, it becomes a serious question whether, if "Reform" is to be treated as a great subject, it might not be better for the interests of "Reform" itself that its consideration should be adjourned to the next age, in order that the country might reap the benefit of fresh minds with new ideas, and healthier impulses than can be expected amongst the officialised *doctrinaires*, who have survived as Statesmen since 1831-2. "Reform" if treated largely, cannot possibly be settled satisfactorily in a single session. If treated in an ambiguous way, there is danger of irritation, and there ought to be some attempt made to cure our Liberal Statesmen of the noxious habit of living in politics upon "open" questions, leaving Parliament and the public mind tossed on a sea of speculation. Modes of thinking allowable to the "Speculative Society" of Edinburgh are pernicious in Downing Street.

Politics invite discussion, but demand decision. Argumentation is useful and effective, but capacity for action is greater and more enduring.

But against the adjournment of "Reform," there is the question as to the possibility of doing so at the risk of leaving the whole subject as

a dropped weapon to be brandished by the disappointed ambitious which might be

“Resolved to ruin or to rule the state.”

If the honour of settling the Corn Law Question in 1846 had been left to the Whigs, we should not, probably, now be plunged into a vast subject, which seems without a goal.

“Now more advanced we view with strange surprise,
New distant scenes of endless change arise,
So pleased at first the towering Alps we try,
Mount o’er the vales, and seem to tread the sky ;
But these attain’d—we tremble to survey
The growing labours of the lengthen’d way,
The increasing prospect tires our wandering eyes,
Hills peep o’er hills, and Alps on Alps arise.”

But it is no matter what causes, whether personal ambition, or the necessity of Parties forced the question on ; it is before the country and Parliament, and it must be dealt with for settlement. The prescriptive mode in which the National Mind has always disposed of great questions will, probably, be illustrated in the solution of this political problem.

The retrospect of English History indicates one thing very clearly, that in every age there has been some favourite leading idea before the National

Mind. On the accession of Henry the Seventh the interests of the Crown were vigorously asserted against the Baronial aristocracy; in the reigns of Henry the Eighth, Mary and Elizabeth the subject of the National Religion was of leading importance; during the period of the Stuarts the question between the Crown and the Parliament was in various forms before the mind of the country; after 1688 to the abandonment by France in 1748 of the claims of the Pretender, the main idea was as to the preservation of Parliamentary Freedom upon the Revolution Settlement. Then after 1750 the subjects of the "King's Friends" or a Parliamentary Cabinet, and the growth of the Empire—internal and external questions—weighed heavily upon the public mind. We drove the French from Canada and the East Indies, and the Ministries of the two Pitts in different ways vastly extended the bounds of British power.

The French Revolution was a great evil to the world; it did much to extinguish the light of a humane and civilising philosophy which had been diffused in the eighteenth century; it kindled the incendiary passions of class equally violent in action and reaction; it unloosed Infidelity warring against God and Revelation, and in its rebounds it increased the power of Fanaticism and Bigotry,

warring against the example of Christ and the spirit of the New Testament. The labours of the Infidel writers and thinkers of France were accursed, but the tyranny of the Holy Alliance, and the intrigues of ambitious dynasties supported by immense armies have done much to stop the growth of Freedom, and to check the progress of Europe.

“Reform” long written about, and talked of for a century, was at last entered upon in 1831, and for two years the country was in a ferment, and passions similar to those of a Civil War were awakened. It is now complained of that we are again to enter upon a serious Constitutional struggle in which we are first to unsettle and then to resettle the basis of the House of Commons.

“Reform” is, doubtless, a most arduous subject. The great difficulty of treating it with an honest view to a positive settlement arises from the fact of there being Two Public Minds in England.

I affirm that there are Two Public Minds in England, the Political and the Social.

The first of these is energetically represented, and takes care that its will should be heard in every nook and corner. It works with public meetings, with a crowded platform, with eloquent

speakers, and with newspapers. It is visible and vehemently audible at the hustings, and it registers its edicts at the polling booth. It has prodigious power, and yet not quite so much as it seems to have.

The Social Public Mind entertains considerable scepticism about "patriots," and looks with wary hesitation upon Parties, and Chiefs, and their pretensions. It believes in the Nation rather than in Parliament; it estimates men by their solid and positive resources. It thinks much of wealth and station, and is far from being oblivious of blood and family.

The Political Mind is intense in its action; the Social Mind is rather solemn and phlegmatic in its utterance; the first lives by passion, the last breathes in prejudice; the first is hard, fierce, and fluctuating; the last is steadied by habits, by manners, by routine; the first is ever running after opinion, and cringing to the influence of power; the second weighs what is behind power, calculates its resources, and asks what is its pecuniary credit, and its means of keeping itself before the world?

The Political Mind of the country fears the strength of the platform. It reads the speeches even

of obscure M.P.'s. It is always either admiring or denouncing particular politicians.

The Social Public Mind is gravely indifferent about a clamorous swarm of M.P.'s making a noise. It looks upon them as flies of a summer, here to-day—gone to-morrow; at worst they can at any time be removed with some prepared sweetmeats from Downing Street.

The Political Mind thinks nothing so grand as a field-night in the House of Commons; the rival Leaders scowling at each other, or looking deadly civil across the table; the benches crowded, the "Whips" in as great an agony of expectation as if the Battle of Waterloo was then and there to be fought over again; the stirring speeches of the great debaters, the "cheers" and the "counter cheers," and the division so close, the crisis—"such a crisis, there never was such a crisis!" The Political Mind meditates profoundly about all that for the next forty-eight hours.

The Social Mind thinks well of great Parliamentary speeches; they are things that ought to be heard, though they are boring at times. It does not care for holiday oratory, and it dislikes mock Chathams, and despises second-rate Foxes,

and pretended Pitts. It likes to see the Queen opening Parliament. Look at the House of Lords, see those benches full of Peers with time honoured titles, with names worn by families famous for ages, and who have outlasted Tudor and Plantagenet and Stuarts; think of their castles, parks, and spreading domains, beautiful with ancestral woods, and tilled by a prosperous tenantry; see there line after line of the fairest of women, and their jewellery dim beside the light of their lustrous loveliness; mark the hush of that grand assembly as it rises in reverence before the Majesty of England, "There, there," cries the Social Mind, "is Representation!" The uproarious M.P.'s, Gentlemen of the House of Commons who come shuffling in after "Mr. Speaker," may be displaced by a General Election, but the names of Howard, and Seymour, and Stanley, and Russell, and Spencer, with ages to look back upon, and with territorial estates to support classic titles—those names and what they represent, and the sentiments which they awaken cannot be made or unmade, either by the fiat of Royalty, or the roar of a multitude.

The Political Mind can see Representation,

chiefly in the wedged masses of the public meeting, in platforms with declaiming speakers, and "loud cheers" and "waving of handkerchiefs," and all the parade of exciting demonstrations.

The Social Mind sees Representation in position, in fixed wealth, in personal consequence, titled or untitled, and in the power which makes Nobodies bend down before Somebodies.

The Political Mind likes passion, and the making and unmaking of Ministries: it honestly believes "there never was a such a crisis;" it is exaggerated, feverish, and formidable; it may often be managed, it can seldom be mastered, and it only becomes weak when fatigued with the monotony of its own energy.

The Social Mind has its own sensation of the vast and grand, and its own broad natural sympathies. It hates brawling mobs insolently pretending to be the People, but it does not object to a multitude in the right place. Thus at Epsom Downs when on the last Wednesday in May the number of the winning horse is being put up, the Social Mind glories in the sight of that enormous crowd as in one tremendous wave it awfully heaves itself towards the spot in which

such gold-fraught eventuality depends. "There," thinks the Social Mind, "look at yonder hill with its carriages, and the Stand-house with its congregation of rank and beauty; see the horses, the equipages, and all the signs of wealth, ease, and comfort, and splendour, that is something like a sight—the People in their wealth and in their bravery, and their orderly freedom. There are Lords, and Commons, and Bankers, and Shopkeepers, and the masses taking their enjoyment, and exhibiting together such a Representation of a free country as cannot be seen out of England."

Every great practical Statesman has known how to use this distinction between the Two Public Minds, and how to base his power upon their due recognition. It has been the fault of the Conservative Party not to think sufficiently about the Political Mind; it has been the error of the Liberal Party not to regard sufficiently the national and personal prejudices of the British Social Mind.

Bearing in recollection the fact that England is swayed by Social as well as Political Influences, it must be plain that any Parliamentary Reform involves two considerations.

1. As to what kind of Representatives will be
elected by a new system.

2. As to what classes of electors will be intrusted with the new privileges of increased political power.

The Social Public Mind may well be excused for some anxiety upon the first consideration, the Political Mind as a matter of course is deeply interested in the last. Both modes of opinion are favourable to freedom, and both agree upon Reform, that deference to extreme views at either side would be most injudicious, if practicable, and even if practicable, would be injudicious. "Sir," said Mr. Canning in words that are still seasonable, "I consider it to be the duty of a British Statesman, in internal as well as external affairs, to take a middle course between extremes, avoiding alike the extravagance of despotism and the licentiousness of an unbounded freedom, reconciling power with liberty, not adopting hasty or ill-advised experiments, or pursuing airy and unsubstantial theories, but not rejecting the application of sound and wholesome knowledge to practical affairs, and pressing with sobriety and caution into the service of the country any generous and liberal principles, whose excess indeed may

be dangerous, but whose foundation is in truth. This, Sir, is in my mind the true conduct of a British Statesman; and they, Sir, who resist indiscriminately all improvement as innovation, may find themselves compelled at last to submit to innovations which are not improvements.”*

* Hansard's Debates, New Series, vol. xiv. p. 854.

THE END.

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